

**Great Clarity:  
Daoism and Alchemy  
in Early Medieval China**

*Fabrizio Pregadio*

**Stanford University Press**

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*To my parents*





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## CONVENTIONS

### TITLES OF TEXTS

The following titles are cited in abbreviated form:

<i>Jiudan jingjue</i>	<i>Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue</i> (Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor; CT 885)
<i>Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue</i>	<i>Taiji zhenren jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue</i> (Essential Instructions on the Scripture on the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles of the Perfected of the Great Ultimate; CT 889)
<i>Langgan huadan shangjing</i>	<i>Taiwei lingshu ziwen langgan huadan shenzhen shangjing</i> (Divine, Authentic, and Superior Scripture of the Elixir Flower of Langgan, from the Numinous Writ in Purple Characters of the Great Tenuity; CT 255)
<i>Shenxian jinzhuo jing</i>	<i>Baopu zi shenxian jinzhuo jing</i> (Scripture of the Golden Liquid of the Divine Immortals, by the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature; CT 917)

The abbreviation CT precedes the number assigned to the text in the catalogue edited by Kristofer Schipper, *Concordance du Tao-tsang: Titres des ouvrages* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1975).

## NAMES OF SUBSTANCES

Standard Chinese names of substances are rendered with their common English equivalents. Synonyms and secret names are translated literally.

## WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Units of weight, volume, and length are rendered with conventional English terms as shown in the table below. The table also shows the average and rounded-off equivalences in the Western metric system that apply between the Han and the early Tang, the period covered by this book.

Unit		Conventional Translation	Average Equivalent
LENGTH			
<i>fen</i> 分		tenth of inch	ca. 0.24 cm
<i>cun</i> 寸	= 10 <i>fen</i> 分	inch	ca. 2.4 cm
<i>chi</i> 尺	= 10 <i>cun</i> 寸	foot	ca. 24 cm
<i>zhang</i> 丈	= 10 <i>chi</i> 尺	ten feet	ca. 2.4 m
WEIGHT			
<i>zhu</i> 銖		scruple	ca. 0.6 g
<i>liang</i> 兩	= 24 <i>zhu</i> 銖	ounce	ca. 14 g
<i>jin</i> 斤	= 16 <i>liang</i> 兩	pound	ca. 220 g
VOLUME			
<i>sheng</i> 升		pint	ca. 0.2 l
<i>dou</i> 斗	= 10 <i>sheng</i> 升	peck	ca. 2 l
<i>shi</i> 石 or <i>hu</i> 斛	= 10 <i>dou</i> 斗	bushel	ca. 20 l

SOURCES: Guojia jiliang zongju, *Zhongguo gudai duliangheng tuji*, 41–50; Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy: Preliminary Studies*, 253.

## PREFACE

In studies published during the last few decades in Chinese, Japanese, and Western languages, the doctrinal and religious aspects of Chinese alchemy have not received the attention that they deserve. This book attempts to fill that gap. Its main purpose is to illustrate the foundations of the Great Clarity (Taiqing) tradition, the earliest known Chinese alchemical legacy, and the background it shares with other traditions of the early medieval period (ca. third to sixth centuries CE).

My survey mainly focuses on the notion of elixir and the ritual features of the alchemical processes described in the Great Clarity texts. These two themes respectively define the specific nature of the alchemy of the Great Clarity and its relation to other forms of religious practice. I try to show, moreover, that the doctrinal and ritual aspects of the Great Clarity evolved from the same background and the same milieu that gave life to the early medieval legacies of Daoist religion. The interaction between these different trends of doctrine and practice allowed alchemy to develop in close association with them. In turn, the close association of the Great Clarity with Daoism is the primary reason for its decline after the Daoist revelations that occurred in the second half of the fourth century, and for the development of new forms of alchemy in later times. In this context, one of the questions that this book tries to answer is why the Great Clarity—named after a term that originally denoted an adept's highest realized state, and was later adopted as the name of the celestial dwelling of the highest deities—became the lowest of the three heavens to which the Daoist practices grant access.

Whereas in most later texts the system of correlative cosmology, with its abstract notions and images, plays a major role in formulating the import of



the alchemical process, the Great Clarity texts ascribe an analogous function to ritual. The sources at the basis of this book, thus, contain a further element of interest, as they provide an image of alchemy remarkably different from the one witnessed by the later, and presently better known, Chinese alchemical texts.

The book has slowly evolved from my doctoral dissertation, completed in 1990. In the ensuing years, further study of alchemical and Daoist sources has refashioned my understanding of the different subtraditions of Chinese alchemy and of their historical and doctrinal development. This has resulted in an entirely different manuscript, at least two-thirds of whose contents are new.

After an introduction devoted to the historical origins of the Great Clarity tradition and its main features, the book is divided into five parts. Part One is concerned with the relation of the Great Clarity to the earlier history of alchemy in China, the place of the heaven of Great Clarity in Daoist cosmography, and the scriptures that were revealed from that heaven. Part Two presents the doctrinal foundations of the alchemical process, its ritual features, and the methods of compounding the elixirs. Part Three is concerned with the place of the alchemy of the Great Clarity among the medieval traditions of southeastern China, both before and after the creation of the Highest Clarity (Shangqing) and Numinous Treasure (Lingbao) corpora of Daoist texts. Part Four contains annotated translations of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*, and the *Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*; with Stephen Bokenkamp's translation of the *Scripture of the Elixir Flower of Langgan*, published in his *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), these translations make the gist of the early Chinese alchemical corpus available in English and more easily accessible to further study. Part Five, finally, looks at the Great Clarity tradition in the light of the later development of alchemy in China, examining the reasons for its decline, the emergence of new traditions centered on the doctrines of the elixirs, and the parallel early development of "inner alchemy" (*neidan*).

I wish to thank Stephen Bokenkamp, Robert Campany, Monica Esposito, Enno Giele, Mark Kalinowski, Russell Kirkland, Burchard Mansvelt Beck, Benjamin Penny, James Robson, and Lowell Skar, who have kindly offered their time and scholarship to help me obtain a clearer focus on several issues

raised by the sources examined in this book. While I am indebted to all of them, responsibility for any mistakes in this book is entirely mine. To Professor Hans Poser, Professor Hans-Werner Schütt, Welf Schnell, and the faculty and staff of the Institute of Philosophy, Technical University Berlin, go my heartfelt thanks for hosting my project in 1999–2000 and for providing help in countless ways. While I was in Berlin, the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange supported two years of work on this book with a research grant. I would also like to thank Carl Bielefeldt, Bernard Faure, and the other colleagues at the Department of Religious Studies, Stanford University, where the manuscript has gone through several stages of revision through the end of 2003, initially with support by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. My thanks also go to the anonymous readers of Stanford University Press, whose reports have significantly contributed to give a better shape to the book. Finally, I am grateful to Phyllis Schafer, who edited an earlier draft of the book, and to Sally Serafim, who edited the final version.

Any attempt to reconstruct features of a lost tradition involves an amount of hesitation and is exposed to errors. I have been aware of this throughout my work, and am even more aware of it now that the book has finally reached its final shape. If this book reflects even a small fragment of the Great Clarity, however, it has fulfilled its purpose.

Fabrizio Pregadio

*June 2004*



## INTRODUCTION

This book introduces the earliest identifiable tradition in the history of Chinese alchemy. Named after the celestial domain from which its teachings had descended and to which they promised ascent, the Taiqing, or Great Clarity, legacy flourished between the third and the fourth centuries in Jiangnan, the region south of the lower Yangzi River. While earlier documents yield fragmentary evidence on the origins of alchemy in China, the extant Taiqing sources provide details on the doctrines, rites, techniques, and aims of *waidan*, or “external alchemy,” and on its relation to contemporary religious traditions.

Like the other Chinese alchemical texts, the Taiqing scriptures use the alchemical metaphor to reveal how existence is related to the Dao, and how an adept can attain an understanding of the principles at the basis of that relationship. They do so, however, in a way different from the greater part of the later and better-known *waidan* texts, on which most studies have focused so far. The later texts ascribe a major role to the system of correlative cosmology; using a large set of abstract emblems, they provide adepts with an abstract model of the cosmos designed to illustrate its underlying principles. These texts document traditions that were established between the late fifth and the early sixth centuries, culminated between the seventh and the tenth centuries, and underwent a slow but steady decline afterward, when *neidan*, or “inner alchemy,” replaced them. The Taiqing scriptures represent an earlier variety of *waidan*. While the underlying doctrinal principles are the same as those of the later tradition, their basic framework is not provided by the notions and emblems of correlative cosmology, which

## 2 Introduction

they virtually ignore, but by the rites and ceremonies they enjoin adepts to perform at every stage of the practice.<sup>1</sup>

### *Origins and Early Transmission*

Looking at how the Taiqing tradition arose, developed, and declined requires, first of all, the identification of relevant sources among those included in the Daoist Canon (*Daozang*). The extant *waidan* corpus consists of about one hundred texts, many of which claim to record doctrines and practices of the high antiquity. Dating issues have long been one of the main hindrances in the study of this literature, as most texts are either anonymous and undated, or bear attributions and dates that are meaningful within the tradition but are historically unreliable. Much work is still required in this area along the lines suggested in two remarkable contributions by Ho Peng Yoke and Chen Guofu.<sup>2</sup> At present, no more than one-fifth of the surviving *waidan* texts can be dated with an acceptable degree of reliability and accuracy; for many of the others, even the dynasty during which they were written is not assuredly known.<sup>3</sup>

Research on the history of Chinese alchemy, therefore, must be based on the preliminary identification of cognate groups of sources that display common features and may broadly be assigned the same date. For the early stages of the tradition, no other work helps in this task as much as the *Inner Chapters of the Book of the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature* (*Baopuzi neipian*), completed by Ge Hong (283–343) around 317 and revised around 330. The evidence that this work provides for the study of early *waidan* will be discussed later in the present book.<sup>4</sup> Suffice it to note here that *waidan* is the main subject of two of the *Inner Chapters*, one of which is mostly concerned with methods based on minerals and plants, and the other mostly with methods centered on metals. According to Ge Hong, the ritual background of all those methods was similar, but the respective texts belonged to separate lineages.<sup>5</sup>

While the sources quoted in the chapter on metals are otherwise unknown, the other chapter highlights three scriptures that had been in the Ge family's possession for about one century, and that Ge Hong deemed to be central to the tradition into which he had been initiated.<sup>6</sup> Their origin and transmission to about 300 CE are related in a well-known passage of the *Inner Chapters*, which describes them as derived from a revelation granted by an

anonymous divine being (*shenren*) to a “master of the methods,” or *fangshi*, around 200 CE:

A long time ago, while Zuo Yuanfang (i.e., Zuo Ci) was devoting himself to meditation practices on Mount Tianzhu (Tianzhu shan, in present-day Anhui), a divine being transmitted to him the scriptures of the immortals on the Golden Elixirs. It was the time of the disorders at the end of the Han dynasty, and as Zuo had no opportunity to compound those elixirs, he escaped to the east of the [Changjiang] River with the intent of settling on a famous mountain to devote himself to that Way. My granduncle, the Immortal Lord (Xiangong, i.e., Ge Xuan), received from him those texts, namely the *Scripture of the Elixirs of Great Clarity* in three scrolls, the *Scripture of the Elixirs of the Nine Tripods* in one scroll, and the *Scripture of the Elixir of the Golden Liquor* also in one scroll. My master, Zheng [Yin], was a disciple of my granduncle, and in turn received those texts from him. But his family was poor, and he lacked the means to buy the ingredients. I served him for a long time as a disciple. Then I built an altar (*tan*) on the Maji mountains (in present-day Jiangxi) and, after swearing a covenant, I received those texts with oral instructions that cannot be written down. (*Baopu zi*, 4.71)

The three texts, adds Ge Hong, were unknown to most contemporary practitioners (*daoshi*) in Jiangnan or elsewhere.

The *Scripture of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing jing*), the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* (*Jiudan jing*), and the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* (*Jinye jing*) form the nucleus of the Taiqing doctrinal and textual legacy. Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries of these texts in the *Inner Chapters* enable us to identify and authenticate their present versions in the Daoist Canon. The received texts describe methods for making about a dozen different elixirs and provide information—often supplemented by other sources, including the *Inner Chapters* itself—on the doctrinal, technical, and ritual features of the Taiqing tradition.<sup>7</sup>

#### ZUO CI, GE XUAN, AND ZHENG YIN

While there is no evidence to suggest that the Taiqing tradition of alchemy was a creation of Ge Hong’s kin, his family certainly played an important role in the preservation and the spreading of the Taiqing texts during the third and the early fourth centuries. Virtually all we know about the early transmission of the Taiqing corpus is what we gather from the passage of the *Inner Chapters* quoted above, which is not contradicted by any historically

reliable source. Based on Ge Hong's account, the three scriptures originated in the area of Mount Tianzhu at the end of the second century. The alleged first recipient, Zuo Ci, gave them to Ge Xuan (164–244), then they were transmitted to Zheng Yin (?–ca. 302), and finally they reached Ge Xuan's grandnephew, Ge Hong. As we shall see, different hagiographic lines of transmission were devised about one century later, when *waidan* was partially incorporated into the corpus of one of the main Daoist schools of the Six Dynasties; the *Inner Chapters*, however, is the main source to provide us with historical details.<sup>8</sup>

In the same chapter containing the passage on transmission quoted above, Ge Hong states that the Taiqing scriptures “did not exist east of the [Changjiang] River” (i.e., the Yangzi River) before Zuo Ci took them there at the end of the Han period.<sup>9</sup> This statement raises the question of where the scriptures, and the tradition that they represent, originated. Among several mountains that have been called Tianzhu (Pillar of Heaven) in different times and in different regions of China, one is part of the Taishan range in the Shandong peninsula in the northeast, and some scholars have identified this as the site in which the Taiqing revelations occurred.<sup>10</sup> In Ge Hong's time, however, Tianzhu was also an alternative name of Mount Qian (Qianshan), which Emperor Wu of the Han had designated as the southernmost of the five sacred peaks (*wuyue*) in 106 BCE. Given the proximity of this mountain to Zuo Ci's reputed birthplace in Lujiang (present-day Anhui), it is very likely that Mount Qian is the mountain referred to as Tianzhu in the passage quoted above. This identification appears to be confirmed by Ge Hong's statement that the Taiqing scriptures “did not exist east of the River,” a phrase that seems to imply that Zuo Ci took those scriptures with him across the Changjiang when he left Mount Tianzhu.<sup>11</sup>

Other sources concerning the “master of the methods” Zuo Ci do not offer significant historical details on the origins of the Taiqing tradition, for Zuo is as shadowy a figure as most other early *fangshi*.<sup>12</sup> Pseudo-historical and hagiographic records depict him not only as an alchemist but also as proficient in the divinatory arts, competent in summoning gods and controlling demons, and gifted in undergoing metamorphosis. His hagiographic account in the *History of the Later Han Dynasty* (*Hou Hanshu*) shares several features with the one in the *Biographies of the Divine Immortals* (*Shenxian zhuan*) but does not include the passage on the transmission of the al-

chemical scriptures found in the latter work. Here Zuo is portrayed as finding the Taiqing texts in a cave of Mount Tianzhu:

Zuo Ci, whose cognomen was Yuanfang, came from Lujiang. He had a deep knowledge of the Five Classics and was versed in astrology (*xingqi*). As he realized that the prosperity of the Han dynasty was declining, and that disorder would soon rise in the empire, . . . he devoted himself to the study of the Dao. He became an expert in divination according to the method of the Six Decades (*liujia*), and could command gods and demons; while sitting in meditation, he could summon the Traveling Cuisine (*xingchu*). While he was devoting himself to meditation practices on Mount Tianzhu, he found the scriptures on the Nine Elixirs and the Golden Liquor in a cave.<sup>13</sup> (*Shenxian zhuan*, in *Taiping guangji*, 11.76–78)

Having heard of Zuo Ci, the *Biographies* continues, Cao Cao (155–220), the King of Wei, summoned him to the capital, Luoyang, where he performed the magical feats narrated in the *Biographies*, the *History of the Later Han Dynasty*, and several other sources.<sup>14</sup>

Ge Hong's granduncle, Ge Xuan, is another elusive figure despite the major posthumous role that he plays in the history of Six Dynasties Daoism as the putative first recipient of the Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) scriptures. His depiction, found in different sources, as a practitioner of several disciplines associated with the milieu of the "masters of the methods"—who are represented, in Ge Hong's account, by Zuo Ci—suggests that the three Taiqing scriptures may indeed have become part of the treasures of the Ge family through him.<sup>15</sup> As for Zheng Yin, while there is no reason to doubt that he took part in the early transmission of the Taiqing scriptures, his role is not entirely clear. Although Ge Hong calls him a "disciple" (*dizi*) of Ge Xuan, presumably he did not literally receive the Taiqing texts from Ge Xuan only to pass them down to Ge Hong, since those texts were already in the possession of the Ge family. More likely, Zheng Yin was the master who provided Ge Hong with the required "oral instructions" (*koujue*) on the Taiqing and other texts, and who formally transmitted the three alchemical scriptures mentioned above to his disciple—then aged about eighteen—around the year 300, as Ge Hong relates in the passage quoted above.<sup>16</sup>

All we know about the beginnings of Taiqing tradition, therefore, is that it originated in present-day eastern Anhui around 200 CE, and was soon transmitted to the nearby region across the Changjiang River. Apparently



## 6 Introduction

the three main scriptures took form, or at least were initially transmitted, within the milieu of the *fangshi*, the “masters of the methods.” If this indication is correct, *waidan* participated in the progressive eastward transmission of elements of early religious culture from the Chu region to the coastal areas that culminated, in the fourth century, with the revelation of the Shangqing (Highest Clarity) scriptures.

### ALCHEMICAL TEXTS IN THE SHANGQING CORPUS

The Taiqing texts present alchemy as superior to other practices such as circulating breath (*xingqi*), ingesting herbal drugs, and abstaining from cereals; they state that while these practices afford only the extension of one’s life span, the alchemical teachings make it possible to rise to a higher spiritual rank.<sup>17</sup> The *Inner Chapters* of Ge Hong and other sources, as we shall see, reiterate this claim, adding that meditation is, with alchemy, the only practice that gives access to transcendence and immortality.

Despite this claim, the Taiqing tradition represents, both doctrinally and historically, an intermediate stage between the earlier and the later religious legacies of Jiangnan. After the Taiqing scriptures began to circulate in Jiangnan, the first important development that affected the history of Chinese alchemy was the creation of the Shangqing corpus of revealed scriptures in the second half of the fourth century, no more than fifty years after Ge Hong had completed his *Inner Chapters*.<sup>18</sup> Presenting itself as the result of a revelation issued from a heaven higher than the Great Clarity, as its name also implies, Shangqing brought forth a new hierarchical arrangement of the southeastern religious practices and their historical or legendary representatives. Emphasizing inner meditation and visualization, it placed other techniques, including alchemy, at a lower level in its ranking of doctrines and methods. This phenomenon, as we shall see later in this Introduction, and in more detail in the following chapters, was the point of departure for a series of changes within the religious traditions of Jiangnan that provide clues to understand the relation of Taiqing alchemy to medieval Daoism.

At the same time, though, Shangqing also integrated several features of the earlier southern traditions into its own doctrines and practices, and incorporated some of their texts into its own revealed literature. The best-known instance of integration of earlier methods concerns the meditation and visualization techniques described in the *Scripture of the Yellow Court* (*Huangting jing*), a third-century work that represents the human being as

home to a multitude of divinities. Shangqing took those techniques as a model for some of its own meditation practices, and accepted the *Yellow Court* into its own scriptural corpus.<sup>19</sup> An analogous process occurred with two alchemical works, the *Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing*) and the *Scripture of the Elixir Flower of Langgan* (*Langgan huadan jing*). Although both texts appear to have been unknown to Ge Hong, and no definite detail is available on their provenance, many of their technical, ritual, linguistic, and stylistic peculiarities are shared with the texts of the Taiqing tradition. The ease with which one can isolate within them the portions exclusively concerned with *waidan* from those containing typically Shangqing features—especially mentions of Shangqing deities and descriptions of Shangqing meditation practices—suggests that their present form results from a process of transmission and adaptation that is common in the history of Daoism: earlier writings were modified or expanded as they were incorporated into the Shangqing corpus, leaving their original core untouched.<sup>20</sup>

The analogies between the two *waidan* texts received in the Shangqing corpus (more precisely, in the case of the *Elixir Flower of Langgan*, of the *waidan* portion of this text) with the three main Taiqing scriptures mentioned by Ge Hong suggest that they originally were part of a single legacy. For this reason, both the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* and the *Elixir Flower of Langgan* count among the main sources of the present study. Besides them, the survey of the Taiqing tradition presented in this book also includes commentaries, anthologies, and other writings closely related to the original scriptures that testify to the expansion of the Taiqing corpus through the mid-eighth century, when this legacy declined, leaving its place to other bodies of alchemical doctrine and practice.<sup>21</sup>

### *Main Features of Taiqing Alchemy*

With few exceptions, the Taiqing texts follow a regular pattern in presenting their alchemical recipes. Using a terse language and a consistent terminology, they first give details on the technical features of each method, focusing on the preliminary treatment of the ingredients, the preparation of the crucible, the heating process, and the collection of the elixir. At the end of the method, they describe the benefits gained from its performance. This pattern allows one to observe how adepts conceived the results of compound-

ing the elixirs and the effects of ingesting them. The Taiqing alchemical medicines were valued for two reasons. First, they granted transcendence and immortality; second, they made it possible—even with no need of ingesting them—to summon benevolent gods and expel demons and other causes of various disturbances, including illness and death.

On the other hand, the Taiqing texts devote little or no space to doctrinal statements and to illustrations of the principles on which they are based. In particular, although they occasionally contain methods designed to reproduce basic cosmological patterns such as Yin-Yang and the Five Agents (*wuxing*), they do not rely on the system of correlative cosmology to formulate the import of the alchemical work. Various other cosmological emblems, notably the trigrams and hexagrams of the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*), that in later sources contribute to fashion the alchemical discourse in both its doctrinal and practical aspects are entirely neglected here.

The emphasis accorded to the performance of methods places the Taiqing scriptures among the *waidan* sources which, in the words of Nathan Sivin, “consist only of instructions for laboratory operations, with no attempt to provide a theoretical rationale.”<sup>22</sup> But while the Taiqing texts are primarily concerned with operational details, one should not conclude that the absence of cosmological theories reflects a “technological” tendency. Despite their apparent silence, as we shall see, the Taiqing texts contain clear allusions to their doctrinal foundations. Correlative cosmology, moreover, entered *waidan* only from the early Tang period onward. Until then, ritual—an hitherto largely neglected component of Chinese alchemy, especially in its earlier stages—was the explicit counterpart of the techniques, and served the function of framing doctrines and techniques into a practice.<sup>23</sup>

#### THE ELIXIR

In the later Chinese alchemical tradition, the emblems of correlative cosmology play two main roles closely related to each other. First, they represent the ontological states that intervene between the Dao and the cosmos, or between unity, duality, and the various other stages of propagation of Original Pnuma (*yuanqi*) into the multiplicity of the “ten thousand things.” Several patterns of cosmological emblems are used in order to show how space, time, multiplicity, and change are related to the spacelessness, timelessness, non-duality, and constancy of the Dao. The Five Agents, for instance, are described as unfolding from the invisible Center, which runs through them “endowing

them with its efficacy,” similar to a bellows that provides energy for the cosmic process to occur.<sup>24</sup> In their second role, the emblems of correlative cosmology serve to formulate the relation of the alchemical practice to the doctrinal principles. For instance, the trigrams of the *Book of Changes* illustrate how the alchemical process consists of extracting the pre-cosmic Real Yin (*zhenyin*) and Real Yang (*zhenyang*) from Yang and Yin as they appear in the cosmos, respectively, and in joining them to produce the elixir, which represents their original oneness.<sup>25</sup>

Correlative cosmology, therefore, is the main tool used in the later alchemical texts to formulate the import of the elixir as symbolic both of the original state of being that underlies multiplicity and change and of the attainment of that state by the adept. The Taiqing texts, instead, do not avail themselves of correlative cosmology either to express doctrinal points or to explicate the meaning of their techniques. Their doctrinal foundations are hinted at by the emphasis they give to certain aspects of the alchemical process, however—in particular, by the endless statements on the necessity of hermetically luting the crucible, by the painstaking instructions concerning the mud to be used for this purpose, and by the technical terminology used in these descriptions. These details show that, despite the difference in formulations, the Taiqing notion of “elixir” is the same as the one underlying the later sources.

This notion is discussed elsewhere in this book, but the main points deserve attention here. As we shall see in more detail in Chapter 4, the crucible is the main tool of the Taiqing alchemist from a symbolic, ritual, and technical point of view. The Taiqing texts instruct their adepts to lute the vessel with several layers of mud before it is placed in the furnace. These instructions recur, in similar forms, in all Taiqing works; they are sometimes reiterated within a single text, to the point of taking up altogether more than half of the *Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*. Besides serving the practical purpose of preventing the vessel from breaking when it is heated, the two main muds used for luting the crucible also play important symbolic functions. The first is called Mysterious and Yellow (*xuanhuang*), a name that is emblematic of Heaven (the “mysterious”) and Earth (the “yellow”), or Yin and Yang. It is made of lead and mercury, and sometimes is also placed inside the crucible above and below the main ingredients. Through the Mysterious and Yellow, the crucible and the elixir incorporate the essences of Yin and Yang joined together. The second mud is called the Mud of the Six-and-

One (*liuyi ni*). It is typically made of seven ingredients, but is said to have this name even when it is obtained from a different number of substances. The function played by this mud is even more important than that played by the Mysterious and Yellow. Symbolically, the Mud of Six-and-One closes the seven openings in the “body” of original Chaos that, in an account that will be examined later in this book, are said to be caused by the emergence of Yin and Yang and, thus, to result in the emergence of the cosmos.

The Mysterious and Yellow and the Mud of the Six-and-One, therefore, re-create within the crucible the state in which Yin and Yang are still joined to each other, and in which differentiation and multiplicity have not yet emerged. In that medium, under the action of fire, the ingredients of the elixir are transmuted, or “reverted” (*huan*), into their “essence” (*jing*), which coagulates itself under the upper part of the crucible. One of the Taiqing texts calls this essence the “precious treasure” (*chongbao*) of the ingredients. The commentary to the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* describes it as being equivalent to the “essence” (*jing*) that the Dao spontaneously issues to give origin to existence.<sup>26</sup>

#### THE ROLE OF RITUAL

The notions summarized above are part of the doctrinal foundations of Taiqing alchemy, and constitute the aspect that distinguishes it from all other ritual or self-cultivation practices. To understand how the Taiqing legacy became part of the religious traditions of Jiangnan, developed in close relation to them, and finally was demoted when new doctrinal and textual corpora gained prominence in that region, instead we have to look at the ritual nature of the arts of the elixirs, and at their promise of granting transcendence and immortality.

Consideration of two points helps us to find initial orientation in approaching these issues. First, the decisive element that enabled Taiqing alchemy to develop in the Jiangnan region was the belief that compounding and ingesting the alchemical medicines—or merely using them as ritual objects and apotropaic talismans—provide the same benefits attributed to other methods: the elixirs afford the power of summoning gods, expelling demons, healing illnesses, and prolonging life. Second, at the same time but apparently in contradiction to the previous feature, the Taiqing texts define their own doctrines and practices as superior to any other teaching or method. Taiqing alchemy, in other words, credited itself with a twofold sta-

tus: the elixirs granted all the advantages offered by other practices, but also promised something beyond their reach. The heaven of Great Clarity represented, for the followers of the Taiqing teachings, the highest celestial domain, and the elixirs were the keys to obtain access to it; other practices (those which Ge Hong qualifies as “minor arts,” *xiaoshu*), were largely or even entirely irrelevant, because the elixirs also dispensed their benefits. The only method of self-cultivation as exalted as alchemy was meditation, for visualizing the inner gods provided the same benefits as compounding the elixirs.<sup>27</sup>

Before we examine how the two seemingly contradictory claims mentioned above are related to each other, we should briefly look at how the Taiqing texts frame the alchemical process into a sequence of ritual actions, and how they formulate their promise of immortality. As I show in Chapter 5, compounding an elixir is part of a larger process that consists of several stages, each of which is marked by the performance of rites and ceremonies. It is this process, and not merely heating the ingredients in the crucible, that constitutes the alchemical practice. Receiving the scriptures and the oral instructions, building the laboratory, kindling the fire, and ingesting the elixirs all require offering pledges to one’s master and to the gods, observing rules on seclusion and purification, performing ceremonies to establish and protect the ritual area, and making invocations to the highest deities. Instead of being seen as mere appendages to the alchemical work, these ritual acts are deemed to be as essential to achieving an elixir as are the ingredients:

If the ingredients are utterly pure, and if you duly perform the purification practices, observe the precepts, and cultivate yourself dwelling in deep retirement and attaining to a state of clarity and tranquility, this divine and wondrous method will never fail. (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 5a)

The performance of rites was actually part of alchemy’s secrecy: ordinary people, says Ge Hong, are not allowed to hear anything about the elixirs precisely because their compounding involves making ceremonies in honor of the highest deities.<sup>28</sup>

The transmission ceremony of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* reproduces the rite celebrated at the beginning of human history by the Yellow Emperor, when he transmitted the text to the Mysterious Master (Xuanzi). After the disciple makes an oath, the master receives tokens from him, and asks the Mysterious Woman (Xuannü, the deity who gave the scripture to

the Yellow Emperor) permission to hand down the alchemical methods. If the goddess gives a sign of consent—a clear sky and the absence of wind—the master may pass on the text and the oral instructions. Then the adept retires to a mountain or a secluded place with one or more attendants. He performs the purification practices (*zhai*) with his helpers, making ablutions and observing the precepts. After he demarcates the space of his work, purifies it from noxious influences, and protects it with talismans (*fu*) and seals (*yin*), he builds a laboratory (the Chamber of the Elixirs, *danshi*) at the center of the consecrated area. Only he and his attendants may enter the alchemical *sanctum*.

Then, using traditional systems of calendrical computation, the adept chooses a suitable time to begin the compounding. When the purification practices are accomplished, and when all spatial and temporal conditions are fulfilled, the fire may be started. In the *Nine Elixirs*, this stage also is marked by a request for assistance addressed to the gods. The adept offers food and drink to them, asking that they watch over the practice and ensure its success. Now the alchemist's attention focuses on the crucible, and he compounds the elixir following the directions found in the texts and the instructions received from his master. At the end, according to a passage of the *Scripture of Great Clarity* quoted by Ge Hong, he performs another rite offering different quantities of the elixir to several deities. Finally, he ingests the elixir at dawn, after paying homage again to the gods.

#### THE PROMISE OF IMMORTALITY

Having ingested the medicine that he has prepared, the adept “becomes a divine immortal and transcends the generations [of mortals],” “rises into the Void,” “roams in the Great Clarity, and in one instant tours the eight poles,” “ascends riding the clouds, and rises to heaven.”<sup>29</sup> This attainment is often stated simply by saying that ingesting a certain amount of an elixir turns an adept into an immortal. In the *Nine Elixirs*, for instance, “by swallowing one pill a day for one hundred days you will become a divine immortal,” and “ingesting one pill a day after your meal, you will become an immortal in ten days.”<sup>30</sup> In the *Flower of Langgan*, “one ounce forms a dose to become an immortal.”<sup>31</sup> In other instances, the descriptions are more embroidered and detailed. By ingesting the alchemical medicines, as is said in the received text of the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*, an adept not only gains immor-

tality but also receives an appointment in the celestial bureaucracy, becoming an assistant to the highest deities:

If you take one ounce each of Gold Water (*jinshui*, i.e., the Golden Liquor) and Mercury Water (*hongshui*), and drink them facing the sun, you immediately will become a Golden Man (*jinren*). Your body will be radiant and will grow feathers and wings. On high you will put in motion the Original Essence (*yuanjing*) on behalf of [the god of] the Central Yellow (Zhonghuang) and of the Great One (Taiyi). If you drink half an ounce each of Gold Water [and Mercury Water], you will live a long life without end.<sup>32</sup> (*Shenxian jinzhuo jing*, 1.7a–b)

Another elaborate account is found in the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*. Here the accomplishment of the alchemical work is preliminary to the adept's attainment of transcendence. Having ingested the elixir that he has compounded, the adept rises to heaven, and only then is he presented with the authentic alchemical medicine, namely the Golden Elixir (*jindan*):

Two ounces forms one dose. Ingest it at dawn with pure water, facing the sun. You will be able to dissolve your form becoming invisible and to fly soaring to the Great Void. An envoy of the Great Ultimate (*taiji*) will welcome you with the Golden Elixir and the Winged-Wheel [Chariot]. You will multiply your form and transform your shadow, making them into thousands of white cranes. You will rise to the heaven of Great Tenuity (Taiwei) and will receive the rank of a Perfected Immortal (*zhenxian*). Your longevity will equal that of the Three Luminaries (*sanguang*); you will revert to youth and move away from old age. Your complexion will shine like jade, and in one instant you will obtain a radiant spiritual force (*yaoling*). Such indeed is the power of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles.<sup>33</sup> (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 3b)

Whether attaining transcendence is imagined as becoming a “divine immortal” or as entering the ranks of the gods, all Taiqing texts include it among the benefits of the elixir. The promise of immortality played an important role in enhancing the prestige of alchemy among the other traditions of Jiangnan.

#### ALCHEMY, RITUAL, AND LOCAL TRADITIONS

In his summary of the Taiqing texts, Ge Hong quotes a passage from the *Scripture of Great Clarity* not found in any extant source of the Taiqing corpus, which asserts that “the Way of long life does not consist in making cer-



emonies or carrying out services to gods and demons.”<sup>34</sup> If this sentence came from one of the later *waidan* texts, which emphasize the symbolic aspects of the alchemical process, we might interpret it as meaning that one’s attention should focus not on the rites themselves, but on how the compounding of the elixirs makes it possible to reproduce the impersonal principles that govern the cosmos, with no need of performing “services to gods and demons.”<sup>35</sup> Being quoted as coming from the central Taiqing scripture, however, these words distinctly conflict with the multitude of major and minor ritual acts that all Taiqing texts enjoin adepts to perform.

This conflict is another aspect of the twofold status of alchemy, and reflects the two levels at which the alchemical process is understood in the Taiqing tradition. On the one hand, making and ingesting an elixir allow one to approach the gods, communicate with them, and even be admitted into their ranks. Achieving this goal requires an adept to perform the methods in conditions of ritual purity and with the deities’ consent and protection. The stages of the alchemical process that precede and follow the heating of the ingredients in the crucible are all performed for this purpose. On the other hand, the alchemical process reveals the original state of the cosmos, and the purified matter of the elixir is the visible token of the “essence” issued from the Dao, from which the entire existence evolves. The sentence quoted by Ge Hong from the *Scripture of Great Clarity* shows that this was the aspect of their work that the Taiqing adepts deemed to be most important.

In a tradition like the one we study here, nonetheless, ritual is needed to frame doctrines and techniques into a practice. Without the mediation of ritual, the methods would be experiments, and the doctrines would not offer a way of approach to themselves, a praxis that allows to attain to them. As the patterns of emblems of correlative cosmology do in the later tradition of *waidan*, so does ritual in the Taiqing tradition dictate the times of the alchemical work and regulate its progression. From the transmission of the methods to the ingestion of the elixir, all the major stages of the practice are marked by the performance of rites addressed to the deities who revealed the alchemical scriptures, those who should protect and favor the compounding of the elixir, and those who are offered the elixir when it is achieved.

For virtually all ritual forms documented in its texts, the Taiqing legacy draws from the local religious traditions of Jiangnan. To give a few exam-

ples, the ritual of transmission requires the offering of gifts and performance of actions that are also mentioned in contemporary and later texts from the same region. The talismans used to protect the furnace and the crucible are identical or analogous to those reproduced in texts attached to the southern Daoist traditions. The deities addressed in the invocations are also mentioned in contemporary sources that were transmitted in the same area. In particular, both gods mentioned in the passage quoted above from the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*, namely the Great One and the god of the Central Yellow, are part of the pantheon of the *Central Scripture of Laozi* (*Laozi zhongjing*), one of the main texts on meditation practices that circulated at the same time and in the same area as the Taiqing scriptures.<sup>36</sup> Before kindling the fire, the adept invokes the Great Lord of the Dao (Da Daojun), Lord Lao (Laojun), and the Lord of the Great Harmony (Taihe jun); these three gods also appear as a single group of deities in the *Central Scripture of Laozi*. Two of them—the Lords of the Great Dao and of the Great Harmony—are also named in the *Scripture of the Yellow Court*, another text on those practices.<sup>37</sup>

The close relation between alchemy and local traditions, however, extends beyond the sphere of ritual. As will be shown in Chapter 7, the Taiqing texts fully partake in the belief that other local legacies have in the beneficial action of the divine beings, and share their consideration for the noxious influences that demonic and other malevolent forces play in human life. Relations with the roots of the local southern heritage are also documented by some textual peculiarities in the Taiqing sources. An example is found in a passage of the *Nine Elixirs* whose early date is authenticated by a quotation in Ge Hong's *Inner Chapters*. Here the adept

becomes a divine immortal and transcends the generations [of mortals]. He will be coeternal with Heaven and Earth, and as luminous as the sun and the moon. . . . He will rise into the Void with his whole family, and will fly even though he has no wings. Mounting the clouds and steering a chariot pulled by dragons, he will roam in the Great Clarity and in one instant will tour the eight poles. (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.1a; see also *Baopu zi*, 4.74)

This passage is almost entirely made of phrases and images shared with—and probably culled from—different poems of the *Elegies of Chu* (*Chuci*), one of the main documents of the early southern traditions: “transcending the generations,” “being coeternal with Heaven and Earth, and as luminous

as the sun and the moon,” “rising into the Void,” “mounting the clouds,” “steering a chariot pulled by dragons,” and “eight poles.” As shown by these borrowings, the Taiqing tradition draws from the same legacy that, about one and a half centuries later, will also provide inspiration to the Shangqing tradition of Daoism.<sup>38</sup>

The close connections of Taiqing alchemy with earlier and contemporary local traditions are also meaningful for another reason, which concerns a larger segment of the arts of the elixirs and not only those with which we are concerned here. Alchemy, as a rule, does not reject in a radical way traditions, methods, and notions that differ from its own; actually the theological, ritual, technical, and lexical forms borrowed from other traditions provide the elements on which alchemy builds a large part of its discourse and its practice, as the Taiqing texts also show.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, however, its own unique way of seeing allows alchemy to graft portions of those traditions, with little or no concern for their original background, into its own body of rites and techniques.

#### ALCHEMISTS AND HELPERS

The incorporation of elements from earlier or contemporary traditions into Taiqing alchemy is, therefore, an essential feature to consider in order to appreciate the nature of this tradition. But understanding how Taiqing alchemy was associated with the contemporary religious traditions of Jiangnan also requires that we ask to whom the Taiqing scriptures addressed themselves, and to whom the alchemical process was accessible as a path to transcendence. Examining this point throws some light on discordant (but, as we shall see, not necessarily incompatible) statements in scholarly literature about alchemy as a doctrine addressed to the social elite or as a technique performed by specialists, often referred to under the general label of *fangshi*, or “masters of the methods.”

The issue is complex, for the identity of the *fangshi*—a heterogeneous group of practitioners of techniques ranging from divination to healing—and their relation to the higher social strata, including the milieu of the literati both within and outside the imperial court, are not yet entirely clear. It seems sure, though, that while a certain amount of transmission occurred in both directions between the *fangshi* and the literati, their tasks within a partially shared intellectual domain were distinct.<sup>40</sup> Part of the notions at the

basis of the *fangshi* practices, in other words, also provided literati and court officials, from the Han period onward, with support for political theories and government policies, but the actual performance of the esoteric arts was the prerogative of the *fangshi* alone.<sup>41</sup>

The main feature that concerns us here is more limited in scope, and consists in the relation between those who performed certain techniques and those for whose benefit such techniques were performed. The differences between these roles reflect, or even create, social distinctions. Trying to look at early fourth-century alchemy in Jiangnan with this model in mind reveals something about little-known aspects of *waidan*. Albeit limited, the available evidence shows that a “host” (*zhuren*, i.e., the person whom we usually call the “alchemist”) who intended to compound an elixir hired helpers, who are mentioned in one of the received texts as “the person who grinds the ingredients” (*daoyao ren*) and “the person who watches the fire” (*shihuo ren*).<sup>42</sup> These allusions to the helpers’ tasks suggest that they were the ones who knew the needed techniques—in other words, that they were the ones who actually *made* the elixir. The “host” was the one on whose initiative and for whose benefit the whole alchemical process was performed; he funded the whole undertaking and knew the significance and purpose of the process through the written and oral instructions received from his master. To compound the elixir, however, he relied on someone who held the needed technical skills: grinding the ingredients “ten thousand times,” spreading mud on the crucible, feeding the fire with charcoal or horse manure day and night—sometimes doing all this for months, as the heating process of some Taiqing elixirs required up to one hundred days. Both the host and the helpers, as is stated in several Taiqing texts, had to undergo ritual purifications and to share the same pure intent of achieving the elixir.

Although there are no definite indications in this concern, the two figures outlined above may sometimes have merged into a single figure of an adept who was both a “master” and a “technician.” This indeed seems to have occurred in later times in the broader context of Daoism, when the term *daoshi*, which often occurs in the *Inner Chapters* and other early texts in the sense of “practitioner” and “master of the methods” (i.e., as a virtual synonym of *fangshi*), shifted its meaning to “master of the Dao,” or of “the Way,” where “way” (*dao*) also means “way of doing something,” that is, “method.” The later definition of *daoshi* includes both the doctrines and the

various techniques—primarily, but not only, those of ritual—held by the Daoist initiate or the Daoist priest, who in this sense is the heir of the *fangshi* rather than the “shaman” (*wu*), of the diviner (and the alchemist) rather than the medium.<sup>43</sup> In our present context, we should note that although the term *fangshi* does not appear in the early Taiqing sources, the tasks of the helpers were comparable in principle to those of the *fangshi*, especially in their role as “possessors of techniques” or, in Anna Seidel’s felicitous wording, as the people who had the “know-how.”<sup>44</sup> One can, moreover, suppose that the host’s helpers based themselves not only on specific alchemical techniques, but also on practical knowledge accumulated in related fields, especially pharmacology. If this is true, the helpers’ contribution to the compounding of the elixirs provides a further example of the integration and use of earlier practices into alchemy.

### *The Great Clarity in Daoist Cosmography*

The status of the heaven of Great Clarity, and of alchemy itself, within the traditions of Jiangnan underwent significant changes after revelations of new bodies of doctrines, texts, and practices occurred in the second half of the fourth century, promoted and supported by families (including Ge Hong’s descendants and kin) belonging to the same milieu to which *waidan* had earlier addressed itself. The compilation of the Shangqing (Highest Clarity) and Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) corpora—between 364 and 370, and around 395 to 405, respectively—resulted in a new arrangement of the southeastern religious customs and their historical or legendary representatives. The new hierarchy was codified during the fifth century in the system of the Three Caverns (*sandong*), the earliest traces of which are found in the Shangqing scriptures.<sup>45</sup>

Within this system, which formally defined the identity of Six Dynasties and later Daoism, the heaven of Great Clarity, with the associated scriptures, doctrines, and methods, was ranked below those related to the Shangqing and the Lingbao corpora, bringing about a decline in the prestige of *waidan*. In this new arrangement, which we shall examine with several related incidents and events in Chapters 2 and 8, lies one of the keys to understand the relation of the Daoist traditions of the Six Dynasties to alchemy. The system of the Three Caverns was devised as part of an attempt to incorporate the various religious practices of Jiangnan into a unitary system after the cre-

ation of the Shangqing and Lingbao corpora. One of the main points at issue in this striving for integration, which at the same time was a striving to settle issues of doctrinal prominence, was how to deal with the doctrinal and textual legacies that existed in Jiangnan before the rise of the new schools; these legacies included the Taiqing tradition. Besides this, a different but related problem facing the creators of the medieval religious taxonomy was how to account for the Way of the Celestial Masters, whose cults had not originated in Jiangnan but had come to claim a major place among the religious practices of that region.<sup>46</sup>

The effort toward integration resulted in the ranking of the various types of religious practices prevalent in Jiangnan within a unified and coherent system. While the two higher tiers in the schema of the Three Caverns were assigned to Shangqing and Lingbao, there is evidence—shown elsewhere in this book—that both the earlier and the non-native corpora of teachings, practices, and texts (including those of the Way of the Celestial Masters and the Great Clarity) were at first consolidated in the third tier. This lower tier was formally associated with the Sanhuang (Three Sovereigns) and with one of the main scriptures of the pre-Shangqing and pre-Lingbao traditions of Jiangnan, the *Sanhuang wen*, or *Script of the Three Sovereigns*. This detail not only explains why medieval alchemy, despite the lack of textual connections of its sources to the *Script of the Three Sovereigns*, is often related to the Sanhuang corpus; it also helps us to understand why the Way of the Celestial Masters is often associated with the heaven of Great Clarity, and why Zhang Daoling, the originator of the Way of the Celestial Masters, is credited with alchemical knowledge by medieval and later sources. An attempt to solve this confusing issue in the formal schema of the Three Caverns was made around 500 CE with the addition of four “supplements” (*fu*) to the earlier classification, two of which were devoted to alchemy and the Celestial Masters, respectively. The lower ranking of the Heaven of Great Clarity, though, was now an established fact that no school or movement would question—with the only exception, as we shall see, of the Celestial Masters themselves.

In parallel to the events summarized above, and probably also in reaction to them, new forms of doctrines and practices developed from around 500 CE that relinquished virtually any form of support by ritual and relied, instead, on correlative cosmology. The text that reflected and supported these developments within the alchemical tradition, the *Token for the Agreement*

of *the Three According to the Book of Changes* (*Zhouyi cantong qi*), not only became the main scriptural source of new forms of *waidan*, but also paved the way for the emergence of *neidan* as we know it today. The final chapter of this book looks at the process that marked the rise and growth of these new forms of alchemy, and the concurrent decline and final disappearance of the Taiqing tradition.

**Part One**  
**The Heaven of Great Clarity**  
**and Its Revelations**





## THE EARLY HISTORY OF CHINESE ALCHEMY AND THE WAY OF THE GREAT CLARITY

The origins of alchemy is a fascinating subject that has engaged the attention of several generations of scholars. In a survey of sources and studies of the Western tradition, Robert Halleux has pointed out the wide diversity of opinions that exist in this respect. As he shows, the debate among scholars has concerned not only the dating of the sources, but especially what constitutes alchemy, how it differs from metallurgy and proto-chemistry, and whether the earliest extant sources provide definite evidence on their origins and background. Due to the remarkable variety of views concerning these issues, there is no agreement on when and where the arts of the elixirs first took shape, and on what role was played in this context by the speculative and ritual features that have characterized alchemy wherever it has developed.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, part of the issue lies exactly with the definition of alchemy. The characterization of the arts of the elixirs suggested by Halleux—“an aggregate of practices and speculations related to the transmutation of metals”—is straightforward but points to the complexity of the questions that require attention.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, the techniques for refining and transmuting minerals and metals do not constitute alchemy per se, as they do not necessarily imply the existence of a doctrinal and soteriological background. More precisely, this background exists in the first place, but for a

variety of reasons the techniques may come to be transmitted separately from it. Within the Chinese tradition, this is true not only of the proto-chemical techniques of *waidan*, but also of the physiological techniques of *neidan*; to give one example that pertains to the latter form of alchemy, one of its greatest representatives, Chen Zhixu (1289–after 1335), emphatically rejects the understanding of alchemy as consisting only of its practices when he writes: “It has been said that the way of cultivation and refinement consists of the techniques (*shu*) of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi. No more of this nonsense! This is the Great Way of the Golden Elixir, and it cannot be called a technique.”<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the doctrinal principles at the basis of the compounding of the elixirs are shared by alchemy with other traditions and disciplines, and the compounding of the elixirs is not the only means of access to them. In Chinese alchemy, this is clearly visible in the fact that the alchemical process, either *waidan* or *neidan*, is rooted in doctrinal notions that originate elsewhere—specifically, within Daoism—and of which alchemy represents one of the applications. Alchemy, in other words, cannot be defined either by its techniques or by its doctrinal foundations alone but rather, using the formulation suggested by Halleux, by the unique relationship it establishes between “practices and speculations,” or between techniques and doctrines. This relationship can take several forms, including some in which the compounding of the elixir is meant in an entirely metaphorical way.

The issues referred to above are especially relevant in relation to the earliest stages of the history of alchemy in China, those with which we are concerned here. The limited amount of evidence is not the only impediment to research in this area, for the available documents share the ambiguity of the Western sources and the resulting variety of possible interpretations. Sources ranging from historical and archaeological documents to mythological and hagiographic accounts yield some information on the quest for immortality and the knowledge of proto-chemical techniques in pre-imperial and early imperial times. At a closer inspection, however, very few of them are found to be directly relevant to alchemy proper; most consist of legendary accounts such as those on medicines of immortality that spontaneously grow in remote places, or refer to artisanal techniques for refining metals and minerals. Some of these legends and tales are likely to descend, in the first place, from the same background that also gave rise to alchemy; no early document, however, makes the link explicit. We do not know, moreover, how secret

transmissions and founding myths of the early guilds of metallurgical artisans may have influenced the rise of the arts of the elixirs.<sup>4</sup> We should be ready, finally, to accept the possibility that although alchemy is always characterized by a practice based on doctrinal principles, the earliest extant sources focus only on the former aspect and provide no more than a few hints on the second aspect, which was the subject of oral transmission.

### *The Issue of the Origins*

While the scarcity and ambiguity of the available data suggest caution, the attempt to fix dates, identify beginners, and distinguish evolutionary stages has often resulted in the blurring of distinctions between the compounding of the elixirs and other ideas or techniques. Two examples are particularly relevant in this concern.

#### THE CASE OF ZOU YAN

A major instance of ambiguity in the historical data and their interpretation concerns Zou Yan (ca. 350–270 BCE), who is traditionally considered to be the founder of the School of Yin and Yang (*yinyang jia*). Although some scholars in the past have speculated on his role in the origins of *waidan*, Zou Yan's biography does not contain any allusion to alchemy, and no text on the elixirs has ever been attributed to him.<sup>5</sup> The short comments that follow the catalogue of Yin and Yang writings in the *History of the Former Han Dynasty* (*Hanshu*; ca. 90 CE) state that those texts dealt with astrological and calendrical predictions. Consistently with this indication, the received fragments of works attributed to Zou are mainly concerned with an early variety of the system of the Five Agents (*wuxing*) and its application to the theory of dynastic succession, known as the "Cycle of the Five Virtues" (*wude zhi yun*) or the "Master Cycle of Yin and Yang" (*yinyang zhuyun*).<sup>6</sup>

Zou Yan's alleged relation to alchemy is largely based on an often quoted passage of Sima Qian's *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji*; ca. 90 BCE). This passage describes Zou as the inspirer of some *fangshi* (masters of the methods) who advised various rulers to search for the medicines of immortality on Penglai and the other mythical islands in the eastern seas off the coast of Shandong:

From the time of Kings Wei (Weiwang, r. 334–320 BCE) and Xuan (Xuanwang, r. 319–301 BCE) of Qi, the followers of Master Zou discussed and

wrote about the cycle of the Five Virtues. When the Prince of Qin became emperor, people from Qi submitted [that theory] to the throne, and the First Emperor adopted it. However, Song Wuji, Zhengbo Qiao, Chong Shang, and most recently Xianmen Gao, all of whom came from the state of Yan, practiced methods of immortality (*xiandao*) and for the release from the form through dissolution and transformation (*xingjie xiaohua*) by means of services offered to spirits and divinities. While Zou Yan had been famous among feudal lords for [his theory of] the Master Cycle of Yin and Yang, the *fangshi* from the coasts of Yan and Qi transmitted his arts without understanding them. Since that time, those who perform flattering and deceptive practices have been countless. (*Shiji*, 28.1368–69)

Some modern scholars have seen in the term “dissolution and transformation” (or “decomposition and transformation”) an allusion to alchemical methods. Even if this indication is correct, Sima Qian neither states nor implies that Zou Yan was an alchemist; his words make clear that, in his opinion, the *fangshi* had misinterpreted Zou Yan’s teaching. The term “dissolution and transformation,” however, is not attested in relation to the arts of the elixirs. Fu Qian, the second-century commentator of the *Records of the Historian*, states that it refers to *shijie*, or “release from the corpse,” one of the Daoist practices for leaving the world as an immortal.<sup>7</sup> This gloss deserves attention, for the mention of “dissolution and transformation” together with “release from the form” (*xingjie*), and with “services offered to gods and demons,” suggests that this term refers to thaumaturgic methods for decomposing and transforming one’s form (*xing*). Methods for achieving “release from the form” by breaking it up and multiplying it, or by dissolving it and hiding it, are known from several sources as part of the extremely wide and varied notion of “metamorphosis” (*bianhua*), of which “release from the corpse” is an instance.<sup>8</sup> Fu Qian’s gloss thus supports the conclusion that the passage of the *Records of the Historian* quoted above has no relation to *waidan*.

As evidence of historical connections between Zou Yan and alchemy, some scholars have also referred to a passage in the *History of the Former Han Dynasty* that mentions techniques ascribed to him. The following is Joseph Needham’s translation of the passage:

[Liu An, the Prince of] Huainan, had in his pillow (for safe-keeping) certain writings entitled *Arts from the Garden of Secrets of the Great Treasure* (*Hongbao yuanbi shu*). These writings told about the holy immortals and

their arts of conjuring spirits (*shi guiwu*) and making gold, together with Zou Yan's technique for prolonging life by a method of repeated (transmutation) (*chongdao*).<sup>9</sup> (*Hanshu*, 36.1928)

While this passage shows that Zou Yan, in the hundred and fifty years or so after his death, had been ascribed with methods for obtaining longevity—possibly by the same *fangshi* who, according to Sima Qian, had misunderstood his teaching—the key expression for his supposed relation to alchemy is the phrase rendered as “a method of repeated (transmutation)” by Needham, and as “a repeated method (of transmutation)” by Homer Dubs three decades earlier.<sup>10</sup> Needham suggests that this expression “is extremely significant because of the later obsession of the Taoist alchemists for repeatedly separating and combining mercury and sulphur in cyclical transformations.”<sup>11</sup> However, the phrase *chongdao* does not occur in the alchemical literature, where the canonical terms for processes of cyclical refining are *zhuan* (“cycling”), *huan* (“reverting”), or *fan* (“returning”). If the phrase of the *History of the Former Han Dynasty* is read *zhongdao* instead of *chongdao* (both readings are possible), the relevant portion of the sentence can more accurately be translated as “important methods by Zou Yan for prolonging life,” again with no hint to his involvement in alchemy.

Besides the above, there has been another—and possibly more consequential—reason for ascribing Zou Yan with an active role in relation to alchemy, namely his traditional image as the creator of the system of correlative cosmology. Whether this image has any historical foundation or reflects even partially the truth is not the main issue, and does not need to be discussed here. The main fact is that, for approximately eight centuries after Zou Yan, no Chinese alchemical text is based on that system.

#### JINGDI'S ANTI-COINING EDICT

Another example of questionable evidence provided by early sources is the edict issued in 144 BCE by Han Jingdi (r. 156–141) forbidding the counterfeiting of gold. Some scholars in the past have seen in this document one of the first clear allusions to alchemy in any civilization. It has also been suggested that “after 144 [BCE], alchemy could only be practiced openly under imperial or royal patronage,” and that the edict had a lasting effect on the arts of the elixirs, as shown by the *Huainan zi* (Book of the Master of Huainan; ca. 139 BCE), a work that “does not contain any explicit alchemy, which fact is understandable since this pursuit had become illegal.” According to

this view, the silence of the historical sources from the beginning of the first century to the second or third century also would be “explained by the Han law against this practice.”<sup>12</sup>

The passage of the *History of the Former Han Dynasty* on the anti-coining edict is terse but unambiguous:

[In 144 BCE, Emperor Jing] established a statute fixing public execution for [privately] coining cash or counterfeiting gold.<sup>13</sup> (*Hanshu*, 5.148)

The edict does not refer to the practice of alchemy and does not mention the compounding of elixirs. According to Ying Shao’s (ca. 140–ca. 206) commentary, Jingdi merely intended to abrogate a decree of the previous emperor, who, in 175 BCE, had allowed people to cast coins without authorization.<sup>14</sup>

This particular instance of confusion in the historiography of Chinese alchemy is also worthy of attention. The interpretation of the edict as relevant to alchemy results from the blurring of distinctions between *waidan* and metallurgy. Chemical artisans and alchemists certainly were acquainted with each others’ methods, and it is virtually certain that alchemy, in China as elsewhere, has one of its roots in the technical knowledge of the metallurgists. But interpreting Jingdi’s edict as directed against alchemy involves neglecting to take into account the alchemists’ quest of transcendence or their attempt to communicate with divine beings—in other words, the doctrinal and ritual components of alchemy. As suggested above, it is only the explicit combination of metallurgical or proto-chemical techniques with these components that defines alchemy. If the doctrinal and ritual background is ignored, the work of transmuting minerals and metals loses its soteriological features, and alchemy becomes proto-chemistry.

### *The “Masters of the Methods”*

Not much is left to write a history of pre-Han and Han alchemy if the two pieces of evidence—if one may call them such—discussed above are dismissed. Despite their importance in other respects, the anecdotal and hagiographic accounts found in literary or Daoist sources are of little or no historical import: not only is there regularly a remarkable gap between the date of these sources and the time of the events they purport to record, but their accounts often concern the search for longevity or immortality or the belief in a medicine of long life instead of alchemy proper.<sup>15</sup>

The little we do know about the early history of *waidan*, however, deserves attention, not only for its own sake but also for its continuity with the later history of alchemy in China, and specifically with the Taiqing tradition. As shown by the passage of the *Records of the Historian* quoted above, among those who shared the belief in a medicine of immortality growing in remote lands were the *fangshi*, or “masters of the methods,” specialists in cosmological and esoteric arts whom several rulers employed from the fourth century BCE on, and whose presence at court became prominent during the reigns of Qin Shi Huangdi (r. 221–210) and Han Wudi (r. 141–88).<sup>16</sup> The main areas of expertise of the *fangshi* were numerology, astronomy, astrology, calendrical computation, divination, and the interpretation of portents; others among them specialized in magic, exorcism, healing, diets, and sexual practices. The function of this sizable and by no means homogeneous group of practitioners in the early history of alchemy is unclear for at least two reasons. First, we know virtually nothing about the forms of transmission among the *fangshi*. Second, their role in relation to the transmission of alchemy is unclear owing to the different biases of the relevant sources. On the one hand, the historical records suggest that few *fangshi* were skilled in *waidan*; in fact, only one reference to the medicines of immortality—not to making elixirs—is found among the thirty-five biographies of *fangshi* in the *History of the Later Han Dynasty (Hou Hanshu)*.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, hagiographic traditions of a later date associate some well-known *fangshi* to the transmission of alchemical methods. Four or five centuries after the above-mentioned Xianmen Gao’s supposed existence on earth, for instance, Ge Hong’s *Inner Chapters* mentions his name in conjunction with an alchemical compound.<sup>18</sup> An additional two centuries later, another source states that he had ingested the Flower of Langgan (*langgan hua*), one of the elixirs related to the Taiqing tradition.<sup>19</sup>

#### LI SHAOJUN AND THE EARLIEST ALCHEMICAL TEXTS

Apparently the only *fangshi* whose role in the early history of *waidan* is acknowledged by both historical and alchemical sources is Li Shaojun. Around 133 BCE, Li suggested to Emperor Wu that he perform a complex practice. The method began with a ceremony to the stove (*zao*) intended to ask some deities (or spirits, *wu*) to assist the emperor in making an elixir. In their presence, cinnabar would transmute itself into a gold fit to cast vessels for eating and drinking. Taking food and drinks from those vessels would extend



the emperor's life, and enable him to meet the transcendent beings. After meeting them, and after performing the major *feng* and *shan* ceremonies to Heaven and Earth, the emperor would obtain immortality. Thus, told Li Shaojun to Emperor Wu, did the Yellow Emperor in *illo tempore*. This event is narrated in the *Records of the Historian* as part of a lengthy debate on whether and how Emperor Wu should perform the *feng* and *shan* state ceremonies. The views of the *fangshi* and the court officials differed on this issue, with the officials suggesting that the emperor should only express gratitude to Heaven and Earth for the restored unity of the Nine Regions, and the *fangshi* maintaining that he should emulate the Yellow Emperor, their main deity, who had celebrated those rituals at the beginning of human time. The *Records of the Historian* relates the event as follows:

Li Shaojun told the Emperor: "By making offerings to the stove, one can summon the supernatural beings (*wu*). If one summons them, cinnabar can be transmuted into gold. When gold has been produced and made into vessels for eating and drinking, one can prolong one's life. If one's life is prolonged, one will be able to meet the immortals of the Penglai island in the midst of the sea. When one has seen them and has performed the *feng* and *shan* ceremonies, one will never die. The Yellow Emperor did just so. Your subject formerly, when sailing on the sea, encountered Master Anqi (Anqi sheng), who feeds on jujube-dates as large as melons. Master Anqi is an immortal who roams about Penglai; when it pleases him to appear to humans, he does so, otherwise he remains invisible."

Thereupon the Emperor for the first time personally made offerings to the stove. He sent some *fangshi* to the sea to search for Penglai and for those like Master Anqi, and also occupied himself with the transmutation of cinnabar and other substances into gold.<sup>20</sup> (*Shiji*, 28.1385)

We shall presently look in more detail at some features of Li Shaojun's speech to the emperor. Let us first remark here that Li's method did not involve ingesting the elixir, and that his alchemical gold did not grant immortality, but only longevity: the emperor would become an immortal after performing the *feng* and *shan* ceremonies. The earliest evidence on ingesting elixirs in order to "last as long as Heaven and Earth" dates from several decades after Li; it is found in the *Treatise on Salt and Iron* (*Yantie lun*), a work based on court debates held in 81 BCE but compiled about two decades later. In a Confucian rebuke of Qin Shi Huangdi's patronage of the *fangshi*, this work says about events that supposedly had occurred one and a half centuries earlier:

At that time, the masters (*shi*) of Yan and Qi set aside their hoes and digging sticks and competed to make themselves heard on the subject of immortals and magicians. Consequently the *fangshi* who headed for [the Qin capital] Xianyang numbered in the thousands. They asserted that the immortals had eaten of gold and drunk of pearl; after this had been done, their lives would last as long as Heaven and Earth.<sup>21</sup> (*Yantie lun*, 29.35)

Around the time the *Yantie lun* was being written, the first details about alchemical texts emerge in connection with Liu Xiang's (79–8 BCE) notorious attempt at making alchemical gold, which ended in failure.<sup>22</sup> Liu reportedly was inspired by a work now lost, the *Arts from the Garden of Secrets of the Great Treasure* (*Hongbao yuanbi shu*), already mentioned above in connection with Zou Yan. The extant fragments of this work include a few passages that may be related to *waidan*, but no clue is available about their context; an isolated sentence stating that “cinnabar can be turned into mercury,” in particular, may come from a discussion of pharmacology instead of alchemy, as the refining of mercury from cinnabar is also mentioned in the earliest Chinese pharmacopoeia.<sup>23</sup> Bibliographic sources, nonetheless, claim that the *Garden of Secrets* and other texts compiled under the patronage of Prince Liu An of Huainan (180–122 BCE) did contain sections devoted to alchemy.<sup>24</sup>

### *Continuity with the Great Clarity*

A hardly negligible feature of the sources examined above is that none of them gives directions on the compounding of any elixir. The earliest document that appears to be historically reliable—the passage of the *Records of the Historian* on Han Wudi and Li Shaojun—is nevertheless surprisingly dense, relating as it does *waidan* to mythology, hagiography, ritual, and even state ceremonies. It is unclear whether Li Shaojun's elaborate method results from a long but undocumented tradition before him or simply reflects his attempt at picking as many features as possible that would capture the emperor's interest and mixing them into an “alchemical recipe.” But despite the silence on what exactly happened within the crucibles, some features in the stories of Li Shaojun and Liu Xiang allow us to relate the records that concern them to the later history of *waidan*, and particularly to the Taiqing tradition.

#### ALCHEMICAL RITES

First of all, Li Shaojun's method shows that the performance of rites is part of the alchemical practices since their earliest recorded mention. We do not

know precisely which divinities were involved in the process—possibly the Stove God (*zaoshen*) was among them<sup>25</sup>—but summoning gods and other supernatural beings while making elixirs is far from being an isolated instance: the same feature, as we shall see, lies at the core of the Taiqing tradition. Similarly of interest is the statement, made in one of the passages quoted above, that the *Arts from the Garden of Secrets* described alchemical methods in conjunction not only with longevity techniques, but also with rites for “conjuring spirits.”

In this connection, a later echo of Li Shaojun’s method deserves mention. The seventh-century commentary to the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* (one of the main Taiqing texts) refers to Li’s method, saying that the gold of vessels used for eating and drinking affords longevity as it slowly saturates one’s stomach, permeating the system of transmutation of food into nutritional essences. The commentary, however, does not hold Li in high esteem; it actually blames him because his method, instead of being based on the “correct instructions for making the Elixir-Gold” (*danjin zhengjue*), gave importance to offerings to the stove (*sizao*) and to incorrect practices (*zuodao*, a term that usually denotes magic). After Li left the court of Emperor Wu, the commentary continues, the emperor understood that the superior methods are those of the Taiqing tradition, namely the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi jiuding*) and the Elixir-Gold of the Great One (*Taiyi danjin*, i.e., the Golden Liquor). The point of this criticism of Li Shaojun, thus, is not that he advocated the performance of rites, but that his method did not address the highest deities.<sup>26</sup>

#### MAKING VESSELS OF ALCHEMICAL GOLD

Continuity with the later history of *waidan* is also shown by the use of gold for casting vessels. Both Taiqing and other *waidan* sources record this use of alchemical gold. The received version of the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* says:

If you cast plates and bowls with the Elixir-Gold (*danjin*), and take food and drinks from them, you will live a long life free from death, and will be coeternal with Heaven and Earth. By collecting [the essences of] the sun and the moon with these plates, you obtain a Nectar of Divine Radiance (*shengguang li*). Men and women should take their food from different vessels, and they will immediately rise to heaven.<sup>27</sup> (*Shenxian jinzhuo jing*, 1.6b–7a)

The *Nine Elixirs* also refers to the malleability of alchemical gold, showing that casting tools was one of its uses:

Be careful not to use excessive amounts [of the ingredients], or the gold will be hard; but if there is not enough, the gold will be soft. Neither would be malleable. (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.5b).

These examples are not isolated in the extant *waidan* literature.<sup>28</sup> The implication is a point frequently overlooked in the study of Chinese alchemy, namely that ingesting an elixir is not the only purpose of compounding it. As we shall see, besides their use in casting vessels, the elixirs have other ritual functions that do not require their ingestion: for example, one can keep off demons and other dangers and obtain the protection of the gods by smearing them on one's eyes, rubbing them on house doors and city walls, or keeping them in one's hand or at one's belt.<sup>29</sup>

#### METHODS FOR THE AQUEOUS SOLUTIONS

A third element of continuity between *waidan* in the early Han period and in later times is contained in the account concerning Liu Xiang. The text that Liu reportedly used for his alchemical experiments, the *Arts from the Garden of Secrets*, is traditionally attributed to the Eight Masters (Bagong). This core group of advisers at the court of Liu An is also credited with an extant work giving methods for making aqueous solutions of minerals. The received version of this work bears the title *Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions* (*Sanshiliu shuifa*), but references in early sources, including those of the Taiqing tradition, show that initially it enjoyed the status of a "scripture" (*jing*). Nothing counters the traditional claim that parts of this text date from the Han period. The simple techniques that it describes, of which the following one for the solution of cinnabar is an example, were used as intermediate stages during the compounding of elixirs:

Place one pound of cinnabar (*dansha*) in a cylinder of fresh bamboo, and add two ounces of chalcantinite (*shidan*) and four ounces of saltpeter (*xi-aoshi*). Seal the openings of the bamboo tube with lacquer, and leave the tube in an acetic bath. The solution is ready in thirty days. (*Sanshiliu shuifa*, 2b)

As the Taiqing scriptures often mention the *Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions* and refer to its methods, this work appears to constitute a textual link—the

only one to have come down to us—between the earliest stages of *waidan* and the Way of Great Clarity.<sup>30</sup>

As shown above, the few reliable records available on the origins of alchemy in China are concerned with the second and the first centuries BCE. The evidence that they provide can be summarized as follows. Alchemy was practiced within the imperial court from the mid-second century BCE and, in that milieu, was placed under the Yellow Emperor's patronage. Its practice involved ceremonies to the stove performed in order to summon supernatural beings, and the elixirs were either ingested or used to cast tools for eating and drinking. The first known text that described the compounding of elixirs is the now-lost *Arts from the Garden of Secrets of the Great Treasure* (*Hongbao yuanbi shu*), which dated from the mid-second century BCE and was used for *waidan* practices at court about one hundred years later. This text may be related to the extant *Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions* (*Sanshiliu shuifa*).

After the fragmentary documentation surveyed in this chapter, the history of Chinese alchemy confronts us with the Taiqing scriptures. The shift is a major one, for these scriptures claim to derive their teachings and methods from divine beings, describe actual methods, give details on ritual practices, and frequently refer to each other. In other words, the proper history of Chinese alchemy begins with these texts. The next chapter introduces the heaven from which they descended and the deities who revealed them.

## THE HEAVEN OF GREAT CLARITY

The Taiqing scriptures provide no indications about the historical origins of their tradition. Like most other *waidan* sources, they are not concerned with this question, and state that their methods derive from revelations granted by deities, immortals, and other divine or semi-divine beings. This silence is significant. The alchemical doctrines and practices are deemed not to have their origin in the human world; instead, they enter the world through a divine revelation, or through the transcription of scriptures originally kept in heaven.

The history of this heaven—of what has been written about it in different times and in different contexts—reveals many details on the nature of the Taiqing tradition. This chapter examines some aspects of this history: the use of the word *taiqing* to denote an inner spiritual state, the features of the heaven of Great Clarity mentioned in several Taiqing and Daoist sources, and the destiny that this heaven faced when it lost its status as the highest celestial realm.

### *The Term Taiqing*

Before the term *taiqing*, or Great Clarity, came to designate one of the several heavens distinguished in Daoist cosmography, it denoted an inner

spiritual state. The term appears in this meaning in several texts, the earliest of which may be the *Zhuangzi* (fourth century BCE):

The accomplished man (*zhiren*) turns his essence and spirit back to what has no beginning, and pleasantly rests in the territory of what has no existence. Like water running into the formless, he overflows into the Great Clarity.<sup>1</sup> (*Zhuangzi*, 89/32/20–22)

The term *taiqing* also appears elsewhere in the *Zhuangzi*. In one of its dialogues among fictional characters that personify impersonal principles or states of being, this work reports a conversation between a master called Without Beginning (*Wushi*) and his disciple called Great Clarity (*Taiqing*). In his search for the Dao, Great Clarity first receives contradictory answers from two other personages, namely No-Limit (*Wuqiong*) and Non-Action (*Wuwei*). Then he seeks the advice of Without Beginning, who teaches him how to achieve authentic knowledge:

Great Clarity asked No-Limit: “Sir, do you know the Dao?” and No-Limit replied: “No, I don’t know it.” Then again he asked Non-Action, and Non-Action replied: “Yes, I know the Dao.” Great Clarity asked: “Sir, as far as you know, does the Dao have any measures (*shu*)?”<sup>2</sup> He replied: “Yes.” “And what are those measures?” “I know that the Dao can be honored and can be vilified, that one can join with it and can part from it. These are the measures through which I know the Dao.”

Great Clarity asked Without Beginning the meaning of this: “If this is the case, who is right and who is wrong between No-Limit who does not know the Dao and Non-Action who knows it?” Without Beginning replied: “Not knowing is deep, and knowing is shallow; not knowing is inward, and knowing is outward.” At these words, Great Clarity sighed within himself and said: “Then not knowing means to know, and knowing means not to know! But who knows the knowledge of unknowing?” Without Beginning replied: “The Dao cannot be heard: if you hear it, it is not that. The Dao cannot be seen: if you see it, it is not that. The Dao cannot be spoken: if you speak it, it is not that. Know the Formless that gives form to the forms! The Dao cannot be given any name.”

Then Without Beginning said: “Those who respond to questions about the Dao are those who do not know the Dao. And although one may ask about the Dao, one never hears about it. There is no asking about the Dao, and there is no response to that asking. Asking about what cannot be asked is to reach the limit of asking; responding to what cannot be responded is to lack the inward. One who lacks the inward and attends to questions that

have a limit will not contemplate space and time outside, and will not know the Great Beginning (*taichu*) inside. Therefore that person will not reach beyond Mount Kunlun and will not roam in the Great Void (*taixu*).”<sup>3</sup> (*Zhuangzi*, 59/22/57–60/22/65)

After the *Zhuangzi*, other early texts mention the numinous state of Great Clarity. According to the *Huainan zi* (Book of the Master of Huainan; ca. 139 BCE), the saintly man (*shengren*)

has forgotten his five viscera (*wuzang*) and has abandoned his bodily form (*xinghai*). He knows without apprehending, sees without looking, accomplishes without doing, and discerns without applying himself. He spontaneously responds to the outer stimuli (*gan er ying*) and acts only if he cannot do without it. He moves without wanting it, like beams of light and particles of brilliance. As his rule he follows the Dao and attains to it. He embraces his foundation in the Great Clarity (*bao qi taiqing zhi ben*) and nothing can enthrall him or trouble him. Vast and deep, he maintains himself empty; pure and serene, he is without thoughts and worries. A great marsh can burn, and he is not scorched; the Yellow and the Han rivers can frost, and he is not cold; a great thunder can shake a mountain, and he is not frightened; a great wind can obscure the sun, and he is not distressed.<sup>4</sup> Therefore he looks upon precious stones, pearls, and jade as stones and gravel; he looks upon the most venerable and esteemed ones as passing guests; and he looks upon Mao Qiang and Xi Shi as deformed and uncomely.<sup>5</sup> He takes life and death as a single transformation, and the ten thousand things as a single extension (*fang*). He communicates through his essence with his foundation in the Great Clarity (*tong jing yu taiqing zhi ben*) and roams in the indistinct space. He does not stir his essence and does not budge his spirit. Keeping up his tally with the simplicity of the Great Inchoate (*dahun*), he establishes himself at the center of Culminant Clarity (*zhijing*).<sup>6</sup> (*Huainan zi*, 7.7b–8a)

Elsewhere in the *Huainan zi*, the inner condition of Great Clarity is projected into the indefinite past, so that the original state of being is represented as the way of life enjoyed by human beings in primordial times:

At the commencement of Great Clarity, in harmony and conformity people were silent and boundless, and in the perfection of their constitution (*zhi-zhen*) they were pure and simple. Being at leisure and quiet they had no haste, drifting along with things they had no purpose. Within themselves they joined with the Dao, and outside they adjusted to righteousness. Their movements were achieved with elegance, and in acting fast they were of ad-



vantage to all creatures. Their words were few and complied with their principles, their actions were pleased and followed their feelings (*qing*). Their hearts were content and without artifice, their doings were pure and unadorned. Therefore they had not to choose [proper] days and times [to act], and did not need to divine through trigrams and omens. They made no schemes at the beginning and no discussions at the end. In tranquility they halted, and under stimulation they moved. Their body communicated with Heaven and Earth, and their essence was equal to Yin and Yang. Joined in oneness with the four seasons, their own light was reflected by the sun and the moon. They were one with the generation and transformation of things (*zaohua zhe*). (*Huainan zi*, 8.1a–b)

The spiritual state of Great Clarity is described in analogous terms in the “Neiye” (Inner Training; 350/300 BCE) chapter of the *Guanzi*, whose date approximates that of the *Zhuangzi*:

If a man achieves correct quiescence (*zhengjing*), his skin will be healthy and fresh, his ears and eyes will perceive clearly, his sinews will stretch, and his bones will be strong. Then he will be able to carry the great circle [of Heaven] and tread over the great square [of Earth], to mirror the Great Clarity (*daqing*) and see through to the Great Light (*daming*). Attentive and mindful without error, he daily renews his virtue; utterly knowing all under Heaven, he reaches to the four poles. To distribute this plenitude in a careful way is called inner virtue (*neide*). To be like this and never go back is to have an overabundance of life.<sup>7</sup> (*Guanzi*, 16.271)

As shown by some of the passages quoted above, the inner state of Great Clarity corresponds externally to a pure space where the saintly man wanders unrestrained. Ge Hong’s *Inner Chapters* also mentions the Great Clarity as a heaven in which one roams freely after achieving transcendence:

Surely you would rise to the Void and tread upon the Light, use the clouds as your floor and the rainbow as your roof. You would taste the Drifting Flow (*hangxie*) of the Dawn Aurora (*zhaoxia*) and inhale the pure essences of the Mysterious and Yellow (*xuanhuang*). Your drinks would be nectar of jade and juice of gold; your foods, azure mushrooms and vermilion blossoms; your dwellings, halls of precious stones and rooms of valuable gems; your journeys, freely roaming in the Great Clarity.<sup>8</sup> (*Baopu zi*, 3.52)

Those who become immortals rise to the Great Clarity, soar in the Purple Empyrean (*zixiao*), travel to the Mysterious Continent (*xuanzhou*), or nest on Mount Bantong.<sup>9</sup> (*Baopu zi*, 10.189)

Ge Hong even goes so far as to suggest a precise location for the heaven of Great Clarity, situating it forty miles above the earth.<sup>10</sup> Yet, in one of the passages he quotes from texts that describe meditation practices, he also mentions the Great Clarity as an inner heaven. The passage concerns those who attain the Dao through those practices:

They chew and inhale their Precious Flower (*baohua*),  
and bathe their spirit in the Great Clarity (*taiqing*);  
outside they radiate the Five Lights (*wuyao*),  
inside they guard the Nine Essences (*jiujing*). (*Baopu zi*, 5.111)

Daoist texts later imagined this inner or outer space as a heaven inhabited by deities, to which the elixirs grant access.

### *Goddesses and Gods of the Great Clarity*

The deities of the heaven of Great Clarity generated and handed down the alchemical scriptures to each other before they were written in a form comprehensible to mankind. The versions of those scriptures transmitted to the world are inferior and partial counterparts of those divine prototypes. According to Ge Hong, the *Scripture of Great Clarity* that circulated at his time was the last part of a longer text to which human beings have no access:

The *Scripture of the Contemplation of the Heaven of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing guantian jing*) is in nine sections (*pian*). However, it is said that the first set of three sections cannot be transmitted for teaching. The central set of three sections is permanently submerged beneath the Three Sources (*sanguan*), because no one in our generation is worthy enough to receive their transmission. The last set of three sections is the scripture on the elixirs proper, in three scrolls: top, middle, and bottom (*shang, zhong, xia*). (*Baopu zi*, 4.76)

One of the early texts containing a method for making the Golden Liquor, received as the *Scripture of the Divine Elixir of the Golden Liquor of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing jinye shendan jing*), was originally written in the unintelligible graphs formed by the spontaneous condensation of pneuma (*qi*) in primordial times. It became comprehensible to human beings only when the immortal Yin Changsheng transcribed it into a suitable form, namely “into Chinese characters” (*hanzi*).<sup>11</sup>

The *Scripture of Nine Elixirs* also is the earthly version of a text that was

originally kept in heaven, and was transmitted from deity to deity before it took its current shape. It was first “announced” (*gao*, the customary term for revelations granted by deities to humans) by the Mysterious Woman (Xuannü) to the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi), who later transmitted it to the Mysterious Master (Xuanzi):

The Yellow Emperor received the Culminant Way of the Reverted Elixirs (*huandan zhidao*) from the Mysterious Woman, who is a celestial woman. The Yellow Emperor compounded and ingested them, and thereby rose to heaven as an immortal. . . . The Yellow Emperor transmitted this Way to the Mysterious Master. . . . (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.1A)

The transmission from the Mysterious Woman to the Yellow Emperor marks the moment when the *Nine Elixirs* leaves the heavens and enters the human world, while the transmission from the Yellow Emperor to the Mysterious Master is the first instance of its transmission on earth. The ceremony celebrated at that time, described in the *Nine Elixirs*, is the model of the rite of transmission performed between master and disciple after the text became accessible to human beings.

#### TWO DIVINE COUPLES

Before its revelation, the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* was called “Superior Scripture of the Nine Methods of the Princess of the Primordial Dao of the Nine Heavens” (“Jiutian Yuandao jun jiufang zhi shangjing”).<sup>12</sup> As this title shows, the text was originally revealed by the Princess of Primordial Dao (Yuandao jun), who is called Primordial Princess (Yuanjun) in several passages of the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*. Ge Hong mentions her in connection with the *Great Clarity* and the *Golden Liquor*, the two other texts that form the main early Taiqing corpus. In both instances, the Primordial Princess transmits these scriptures to her son, Laozi.<sup>13</sup>

The revelation of the *Nine Elixirs* is due therefore to two divine couples, each of which consists of a female and a male figure: the Primordial Princess and Laozi on the one hand (transmission in heaven), and the Mysterious Woman and the Yellow Emperor on the other (transmission on earth). The relation between the components of the two couples is similar: the Primordial Princess is the mother and teacher of Laozi, while the Mysterious Woman, as we shall presently see, is one of several deities who granted teachings to the Yellow Emperor. Also similar is the relation between the two male and the two female figures. Laozi—or his divine counterpart, Laojun

or Lord Lao—and the Yellow Emperor are in several ways two aspects of the same divine being: the former is on the non-temporal level what the latter is in the human time, where he rules at the beginning of history.<sup>14</sup> Analogously, the Primordial Princess is associated with the celestial version of the *Nine Elixirs*, not addressed to human beings and therefore differently titled, while the Mysterious Woman is related to its transmission to the Yellow Emperor, in its current form and with its current title. The association between the Primordial Princess and the Mysterious Woman is emphasized by sources that call the latter goddess Mysterious Woman of the Nine Heavens (Jiutian Xuannü), an appellation reminiscent of the title Princess of the Primordial Dao of the Nine Heavens mentioned in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE ROLE OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR

As in later Daoist traditions, therefore, the main role in the revelation of the *Nine Elixirs* and the other Taiqing scriptures is played by female deities.<sup>16</sup> Although the Yellow Emperor is mentioned in the title of the *Nine Elixirs*, he is only an agent in the transmission of the text from heaven to the human world. The *Nine Elixirs* shares this feature with several other works. The Yellow Emperor reigns at the beginning of human history and is associated with the origins of several traditions and techniques, but he is not a master; several sources represent him as a disciple of various divine or semi-divine beings, including the Mysterious Woman, the Pure Woman (Sunü), Guangcheng zi, and Qi Bo.<sup>17</sup>

The Yellow Emperor's association with the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* is, nonetheless, significant. Not only is he a link in the descent of the text from heaven to earth, but the compounding of an alchemical medicine is often mentioned, especially in non-alchemical sources, as the culmination of his quest for teachings that enabled him to establish a perfect system of government. A Tang work, for instance, describes his pilgrimage to various sacred places, where he meets divine beings who bestow teachings and scriptures upon him. Along his way he finds the "Scripture of the Nine Elixirs of the Golden Tripods" ("Jinding jiudan zhi jing") in a jade casket, and receives the "Instructions on the [Elixir in] Nine Cycles" ("Jiuzhuan zhi jue") from the Mysterious Woman.<sup>18</sup> The commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* also refers to the Yellow Emperor's initiatory journey, at the end of which he compounded two elixirs that enabled him to rise to heaven:

In ancient times, the Yellow Emperor ascended Mount Wangwu (Wangwu shan, in present-day Henan) and received scriptures on the elixirs; he climbed Mount Kongtong (Kongtong shan, Gansu) and questioned Guangcheng zi; to search for the Dao and the doctrines of Nourishing Life (*yangsheng*) he listened to the teachings of the Mysterious Woman and the Pure Woman; and to scrutinize the divine and the supernatural he wrote down the words of the Baize. Thus he obtained a thorough knowledge of the Dao and the real, and a deep discernment of the mysterious and the secret. Then he sublimated and fixed the Elixir in Nine Cycles (*jiuzhuan*) at the foot of Mount Jing (Jingshan, Henan), and transmuted the Liquid Pearl (*liuzhu*) on the Lake of the Tripod (Dinghu, also in Henan).<sup>19</sup> (*Jiudan jingjue*, 5.2a)

The final sentence of the passage quoted above elaborates on the myth that established the connection between the Yellow Emperor and alchemy—his casting of a tripod on Mount Jing, and his subsequent ascension to heaven. Wang Chong's (ca. 27–97) *Discussions Weighed in the Balance* (*Lunheng*) is among the early sources that report this famous episode:

The Yellow Emperor extracted copper from Mount Shou (Shoushan, Henan) and cast a tripod at the foot of Mount Jing (Jingshan, Henan). When the tripod was ready, a dragon with a long beard appeared and welcomed the Yellow Emperor. The Emperor mounted on the dragon, followed by more than seventy ministers and concubines. The dragon rose up and left. The remaining officers could not mount on the dragon; they held on to its beard, pulling it and causing the Yellow Emperor's bow to fall down. They looked on high; when the Yellow Emperor had risen to heaven, they collected his bow and the dragon's beard, and wailed. Therefore the later generations called that place Dinghu (Lake of the Tripod) and his bow *wuhao* ("bow of wailing").<sup>20</sup> (*Lunheng*, 7.305)

The reference to the tripod, an emblem of the divine origins of political power in ancient China, is likely to have played a role in the choice of the *Nine Elixirs* as textual support for providing alchemical instructions to Emperor Gaozong (r. 649–83), the first recipient of the commentary to the *Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods*.<sup>21</sup> Nine tripods, according to another early legend, were inscribed by the mythical Emperor Yu with the images of demons and spirits in order to obtain control of them; the elixirs of the Nine Tripods, as we shall see, possess analogous apotropaic powers.<sup>22</sup> A scripture mentioning the Nine Tripods in its title, moreover, was suited to exalt the state of peace and unity in the ancestral Nine Provinces of China, which had been restored only a few decades before Gaozong's acces-

sion to the throne after the long period of disunion of the Three Kingdoms and the Southern and Northern Dynasties.

### *The Three Clarities and the Three Caverns*

Not only the Taiqing texts, but other sources also show that the heaven of Great Clarity was the most exalted celestial domain—an external counterpart to the inner spiritual state described in the *Zhuangzi* and the other works quoted above in the present chapter—before the Daoist cosmographic model was reshaped by the revelations of the late fourth century. Among these sources is the *Central Scripture of Laozi* (*Laozi zhongjing*), one of the main early texts on Daoist meditation practices that describes the human being as the seat of a host of deities, the most important of which also have a celestial counterpart. The highest god in the *Central Scripture*, the Supreme Great One (Shangshang Taiyi), as well as the Lord of the Dao (Daojun, who is described as one of the multiple facets taken by the Great One), resides in the Great Clarity:

The Supreme Great One is the Father of the Dao and exists before Heaven and Earth. He resides above the Nine Heavens (*jiutian*), within the Great Clarity, outside the Eight Obscurities, inside the Subtle Tenuity. (*Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 1)

The Lord of the Dao is the One. . . . He resides above the Nine Heavens at an altitude of ten thousand *zhang*, within the Palace of the Purple Chamber in the Great Abyss (*taiyuan zifang gong*). . . . Above him is the five-colored glow of the cloud pneuma of Great Clarity. Under a nine-layered flowery canopy, Laozi and Great Harmony attend upon him on his left and his right. (*Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 5)

Two other deities mentioned in the *Central Scripture*, the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwang mu) and her spouse, the King Father of the East (Dongwang fu), also dwell “in the hamlet of the Great Clarity” (*Taiqing xiang*), and in one of the meditation exercises described in the text, the adept is instructed to circulate the breaths of Great Clarity within his own body.<sup>23</sup> These references show that the Great Clarity is not only the heaven from which the alchemical revelations have descended; it is the highest celestial realm, where the highest gods reside and to which not only the elixirs but also meditation practices grant access.

The status of the Great Clarity, however, declined after the Shangqing

(Highest Clarity) and the Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) revelations occurred in the latter half of the fourth century. Dating from the late Six Dynasties onward, many sources in the Daoist Canon refer to the Great Clarity as one of the Three Clarities (*sanqing*). With a remarkable shift from the earlier descriptions, the word *qing*, or “clarity,” takes on a new meaning in these texts, denoting not only a celestial domain (*jing*) but also the corresponding ruling deity, known as Celestial Worthy (*tianzun*). In this arrangement, the earlier gods find no more place, and the Great Clarity itself is placed at the lower end, below the heavens of the Jade Clarity (Yuqing) and the Highest Clarity (Shangqing). The Three Clarities, moreover, occupy an intermediate place in an even larger cosmographic model. Above them lies the supreme celestial sphere, namely the Great Canopy heaven (Daluo tian); below them are the Four Brahmā heavens (*si fantian*) and farther below the Three Realms (*sanjie*), that is, the realms of formlessness (*wuse jie*, containing four heavens), form (*sejie*, containing eighteen heavens), and desire (*yujie*, containing six heavens).<sup>24</sup>

Another feature of this classificatory scheme, and the most important one for the discussion that follows, is the notion of the Three Caverns (*sandong*). Originally denoting the breaths (*qi*) of each of the original Three Sovereigns (*sanhuang*, i.e., the rulers of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity), the “caverns” also represent the three main doctrinal and textual corpora of Daoism during the Six Dynasties. The Jade Clarity is associated with the Cavern of Reality and the Shangqing corpus; the Highest Clarity (in spite of its name) with the Cavern of Mystery and the Lingbao corpus; and the Great Clarity with the Cavern of Spirit and the Sanhuang (Three Sovereigns) corpus. The name Sanhuang was derived from the *Script of the Three Sovereigns*, or *Sanhuang wen*, deemed to be the most representative text of the southern traditions before the creations of the Shangqing and Lingbao corpora.<sup>25</sup>

This outline of the Three Caverns merely takes into account the outer features of an elaborate system in which each item in a series matches the corresponding items in all other series. The consequences that this development had on the history of alchemy will be examined later in the present book (see Chapters 8 and 12). For the moment, it is sufficient to note that the resulting fabric of related categories (shown in Table 1) underlies many medieval Daoist doctrines, beliefs, and practices, and continued to define for several centuries major aspects of Daoist doctrine and practice, from the arrange-

TABLE I  
*The Three Clarities (sanqing) and related categories.*

THREE CLARITIES ( <i>sanqing</i> ) Jade Clarity (Yuqing)	Highest Clarity (Shangqing)	Great Clarity (Taiqing)
THREE HEAVENS ( <i>santian</i> ) Pure Tenuity (Qingwei tian)	Leftovers of Yu's Food (Yuyu tian)	Great Scarlet (Dachi tian)
THREE CELESTIAL WORTHIES ( <i>san tianzun</i> ) Original Commencement (Yuanshi tianzun)	Numinous Treasure (Lingbao tianzun)	Way and Virtue (Daode tianzun)
THREE PNEUMAS ( <i>sanqi</i> ) Inaugural, Green ( <i>shiqing</i> )	Original, Yellow ( <i>yuanhuang</i> )	Mysterious, White ( <i>xuanbai</i> )
THREE CAVERNS ( <i>sandong</i> ) Reality (Dongzhen)	Mystery (Dongxuan)	Spirit (Dongshen)
THREE TREASURE LORDS ( <i>san baojun</i> ) Celestial Treasure (Tianbao jun)	Numinous Treasure (Lingbao jun)	Divine Treasure (Shenbao jun)
TEXTUAL CORPORA Shangqing	Lingbao	Sanhuang
TRANSCENDENT BEINGS saints ( <i>shengren</i> )	perfected ( <i>zhenren</i> )	immortals ( <i>xianren</i> )

ment of scriptural collections in the Daoist Canon to the ordination stages of the masters of ritual. It is as part of this system that the heaven of Great Clarity, and its alchemical revelations, were assigned a place within medieval and later Daoism.

#### THE SEVEN HEAVENS OF TAO HONGJING

The status assigned to the Great Clarity among the Three Caverns, thus, resulted from the revelations of new bodies of teachings and practices—those attached to the Shangqing and the Lingbao corpora—that claimed the higher ranks in the doctrinal and religious hierarchy of medieval Daoism. In the next section of this chapter, we shall look at an impressive work of synthesis and classification dating from the late sixth century that builds on the system outlined above. Not much earlier, a smaller-scale, but nonetheless comprehensive, essay of systematization had been made by Tao Hongjing (456–536), the ninth patriarch of the Shangqing lineage. In his *Chart of the Ranks and Functions of the Perfected Numinous Beings* (*Zhenling weiye tu*), Tao divided the cosmos into seven domains, listed below in a descending order together with the names of the respective ruling deities:<sup>26</sup>



Jade Clarity (Yuqing)

Celestial Worthy of Original Commencement (Yuanshi tianzun)

Highest Clarity (Shangqing)

Most High Great Lord of the Dao, Mysterious Sovereign of the Jade  
Luminary (Taishang yuchen xuanhuang Da Daojun)

Great Ultimate (Taiji)

Imperial Lord of the Golden Portal (Jinque dijun, i.e., Li Hong)

Great Clarity (Taiqing)

Most High Lord Lao (Taishang Laojun) and Highest Sovereign, Most  
High, Supreme Great Lord of the Dao (Shanghuang taishang wushang  
Da Daojun)

Nine Palaces (Jiugong)

Secretary of the Nine Palaces (Jiugong shangshu, i.e., Zhang Feng,  
cognomen Gongxian)

Cavern-Heavens (Dongtian)

Middle Lord Mao (Zhong Maojun, i.e., Mao Gu)

Fengdu

Great Emperor of Northern Yin (Beiyin dadi)

The seven domains of Tao Hongjing actually decrease to four if one considers that all, except for the first one, are arranged in pairs: the Highest Clarity and Great Ultimate are both located in the north, while the Great Clarity and the Nine Palaces are in the east and the west, respectively, above Kunlun, the mountain at the center of the cosmos. Hidden under Tao Hongjing's description, therefore, is a reiteration of the three-tier Daoist cosmography that we have outlined above, with the addition of a fourth double-layered component made of the Cavern-Heavens, located underneath the main sacred mountains, and Mount Fengdu, the headquarters of the realm of the dead. In other words, Tao merely added a terrestrial complement to the scheme of the Three Clarities. Reiterating the close association between the Great Clarity and the Nine Palaces, a passage of Tao's *Declarations of the Perfected* (*Zhen'gao*) states that those who hold the virtue of the highest saints "roam throughout the Great Clarity and become median immortals (*zhongxian*) of the Nine Palaces."<sup>27</sup> In the same work, as well as twice in his *Concealed Instructions for the Ascent to Perfection* (*Dengzhen yinjue*), moreover, Tao identifies the Great Clarity as a "lineage" (*jia*), acknowledging its status not only as a heaven, but also as a body of doctrines and methods that were transmitted among its adepts.<sup>28</sup>

The list of Tao Hongjing's seven domains also shows that, in his system, the Great Clarity is the only heaven governed by two gods, both of whom are aspects of Laojun, or Lord Lao, the divine aspect of Laozi whose role in the revelations of the Taiqing scriptures has been noted above. Tao Hongjing remarks in his *Chart* that Lord Lao is the Ruler of the Way of Great Clarity (Taiqing dao-zhu).<sup>29</sup> In the classical scheme of the Three Clarities, Lord Lao performs the same office of supreme deity of the Great Clarity under the name of Daode tianzun, the Celestial Worthy of the Way and Its Virtue, an appellation derived from the title of the text that is attributed to him, the *Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue* (*Daode jing*). He reappears in the Great Ultimate, the heaven above the Great Clarity, as Li Hong, Lord Lao's name as the forthcoming messiah or Saint of the Later Times (*housheng*).<sup>30</sup> Laozi, or Lord Lao, therefore, continues to play the same role as a god associated with the Great Clarity both in the system of the Three Caverns and in Tao Hongjing's amplification.

For each heaven, besides the main god, Tao Hongjing names other related divine beings, immortals, and historical figures divided into two classes, marked as "left rank" and "right rank" (*zuowei* and *youwei*). In addition, he includes in some instances, but not for the Great Clarity, two further groups, namely the female perfected (*nüzhèn*) and the "vagrants" (*sanren*) who have not yet received an office in the otherworldly bureaucracy. Almost all names listed in the Great Clarity section of Tao Hongjing's *Chart* are also found in the larger work of synthesis and systematization referred to above, to which we shall now turn.

### *Daoist Heavens and Elixirs in the Supreme Secret Essentials*

Through its vast design and its remarkable dimensions, the *Supreme Secret Essentials* (*Wushang biyao*) proposes to offer its readers a comprehensive view of Daoist doctrines and practices. The authors of this encyclopedia, completed on imperial order in 588 CE, aimed to describe in one hundred chapters—about one-third of which have been lost—Daoist teachings on cosmogony, cosmography, cosmic cycles, deities, sacred writings, the human being, morals, communal and individual practices, and stages of spiritual realization. These subjects are illustrated through quotations from more than one hundred texts, most of which are extant in the current Daoist Canon.<sup>31</sup>

Among the many notable features of this work is its arrangement into two

main parts. The first is concerned with the genesis and the ordering of the cosmos, and the second with several types of practices. While the subjects dealt with in the first part are arranged in a descending order to reflect the course that leads from the Dao to the human world, those treated in the second part are arranged in an ascending order to illustrate the corresponding gradual process that leads from the human world to the Dao.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, the opening chapters of the *Supreme Essentials* deal with the Dao, the One Pnuma (*yiqi*), and the highest heavens; then comes the world in which we live, with focus on the Sun, the Moon, and the planets, and on mountains, caverns, and woods; and finally the human being with its inner gods. The later chapters describe about thirty states of transcendence, arranged from the lower to the higher ones. These chapters are concerned, in particular, with “release from the corpse” (*shijie*), “changing one’s form” (*yixing*), and obtaining longevity; with the ranking of the Immortals of Earth (*dixian*) and of Heaven (*tianxian*); with rising to the Court of the Moon (*yueting*) and the Gate of the Sun (*rimen*); and with ascent to the heavens distinguished in Daoist cosmography, including the Nine Palaces (Jiugong), the Great Clarity (Taiqing), the Great Ultimate (Taiji), the Great Tenuity (Taiwei), the Highest Clarity (Shangqing), the Purple Tenuity (Ziwei), the Jade Clarity (Yuqing), the Nine Heavens (*jiutian*), and the Jade Capital (Yujing). The highest states are “entering What Is So by Itself” (*ru ziran*) and the return to the Dao by “compensating obscure silence” (*dong mingji*).<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the *Secret Essentials*, one finds mentions of otherworldly heavens and celestial palaces often arranged in a hierarchical order, and descriptions of the deities who inhabit them. In one of these passages, the Great Clarity appears as one of seven “palaces” (*gong*) located not below, but within the Three Realms themselves. Above the Great Clarity are the palaces of the Highest Clarity and the Great Ultimate, and below are those of the officers of Heaven, Earth, the Caverns, and Water.<sup>34</sup> The Palace of the Great Clarity, moreover, is said to consist of a Palace of Great Purity (Taisu gong), which is the residence of the Lord of Great Purity (Taisu jun), a Palace of Great Harmony (Taihe gong), which is the residence of the Lord of the Great Harmony (Taihe jun), and a Tower of the Golden Flower (Jinhua lou), which houses the Jade Registers of the Immortals and the Perfected (*xianzhen yulu*).<sup>35</sup> The ranking of the Great Clarity here is similar to the one in Tao Hongjing’s system, namely as one of several intermediate domains passed through in the ascent to the Dao.

The names of these and other palaces are said to be nothing but appellations (*hao*) of the deities who rule them. Those associated with the Three Clarities, in particular, are designations taken by the respective deities in the first year of each of the three major pre-cosmic eras, known as Dragon Magnificence (Longhan), Scarlet Light (Chiming), and Highest Sovereign (Shanghuang).<sup>36</sup> In those years, each deity gave birth to one of three main Daoist textual corpora, namely the scripts of the heaven of Jade Clarity (the Shangqing corpus), the scriptures of the heaven of Highest Clarity (the Lingbao corpus), and the writs of the Three Sovereigns (the Sanhuang corpus).<sup>37</sup> In another, more elaborate classification, the scriptures are arranged into three categories according to their relation to spiritual domains and their duration in *kalpas* (*jie*), or cosmic cycles. The superior scriptures are those issued from the Celestial Worthy of Original Commencement himself; they belong to the world above form and are never destroyed. The median ones consist of “the various transmutations (i.e., the alchemical methods) and the talismanic charts (*futu*) of the Great Clarity, and the scriptures of the Way of Great Peace (*taiping daojing*)”; they all belong to the world of form and are destroyed at the end of a great *kalpa*. The inferior ones are related to the practices of “nourishing life” (*yangsheng*); they pertain to the world of desire and are destroyed at the end of a small *kalpa*.<sup>38</sup>

Deities, immortals, and historical persons associated with the Great Clarity in the *Secret Essentials* include almost all names listed by Tao Hongjing in the corresponding section of his *Ranks and Functions of the Perfected Numinous Beings*, with the addition of many others. While they are arranged into two groups as in Tao Hongjing’s scheme, they are distinguished according to their higher or lower rank. The first, superior group includes beings who are qualified as deities (*shen*). None of them has ever lived a historical existence on earth: they consist of divine emperors, lords, envoys (*shizhe*), jade women (including the Jade Women of the Divine Elixirs, *shendan yunü*), and various officers. Only their ranks and appellations are known, while their surnames and names, as well as the “virtuous training” (*deye*) that they underwent, are unknown.<sup>39</sup> Some of them attained their divine status through study, but others are said to be divine by their own nature. The highest deities in this group include, once again, Lord Lao and two avatars of the Great Lord of the Dao (Da Daojun), respectively living in the Northern and the Southern Palaces of Great Clarity.

The second group consists of beings qualified as “perfected and immor-

tals” (*zhenxian*). Some of them are said to be on the way to rising to the next degree in the spiritual hierarchy, namely to the heaven of the Great Ultimate. Among those who are directly related to Taiqing scriptures or methods, several have received the Elixir of Great Clarity, including Ma Mingsheng, Yin Changsheng, and Ge Hong himself. In the even more varied list of those deemed to have been related to alchemy, but not specifically to the Taiqing scriptures or methods, we find the Eight Masters (Bagong) of Liu An, some famous *fangshi* (masters of the methods), as well as Zhang Daoling, the beginner of the Way of the Celestial Masters (Tianshi dao), whose relation to the heaven of Great Clarity we shall examine later.<sup>40</sup>

Just as some beings can advance from the Great Clarity to the Great Ultimate, others have reached the degree of the Great Ultimate, but still dwell in the Great Clarity. This is the case of Li Boyang (one of the names of Laozi), who is called “the Laojun of the Great Clarity” in the *Secret Essentials*; of Yin Xi, the Guardian of the Pass, who was the first to receive Laozi’s teachings; of Zuo Ci, the first recipient of the Taiqing scriptures;<sup>41</sup> of Juanzi and his disciple Su Lin, both of whom are important saints of the Shangqing school but are also endowed with alchemical knowledge;<sup>42</sup> and of Chunyu Taixuan, better known as Chunyu Shutong, who is said to have received the *Token for the Agreement of the Three* (*Zhouyi cantong qi*) from Wei Boyang. Another eminent and well-known “perfected immortal” related to the Great Ultimate is Zhuangzi, who rose to that heaven after compounding an elixir, and now dwells there with his master.<sup>43</sup>

The *Secret Essentials* also contains lists of drugs (*yao*) arranged into six degrees according to the rank granted by their ingestion: the drugs of the Jade Clarity, of the Highest Clarity, of the Great Ultimate, of the Great Clarity, and of the Immortals of Heaven and of Earth.<sup>44</sup> They include single substances (especially plants), elixirs, as well as the numinous *zhi*—supernatural plants and excrescences that confer immortality and that only adepts are able to recognize as such, while they are unnoticed by ordinary people.<sup>45</sup> These drugs grant varying degrees of transcendence, from a longevity of three or four hundred years to permanence beyond the duration of Heaven itself. Their rise in the hierarchy is parallel to changes in their features: plant products are especially mentioned among the drugs of the Immortals of Earth, while the nomenclature of the elixirs has no literal connotations from the drugs associated with the Great Ultimate upward, and no formula at all exists for those related to the two highest heavens. The implication is that

the human beings do not know the methods for making these drugs, as only the supreme deities have access to them.

The extensive description of Daoist teaching, mythical history, cosmography, pantheon, and literature in the *Supreme Secret Principles* shows how tightly the Great Clarity and its teachings were integrated into the doctrinal foundations of Six Dynasties Daoism. For the authors of the *Principles*, and even more so for those of the works quoted in it, the Taiqing legacy constituted a definite entity among the different forms that the Daoist teaching took during the Six Dynasties. Accordingly, as we have seen, Tao Hongjing uses the phrase Way of Great Clarity (*taiqing dao*) in his *Ranks and Functions of the Perfected Numinous Beings*. In both his *Declarations of the Perfected* and his *Concealed Instructions*, moreover, Tao refers to the Great Clarity as a “lineage” (*jia*), a term that in this, as in similar instances, denotes not a “school” but a legacy centered on doctrines, practices, and texts, and transmitted by masters and disciples.

The status assigned to the Great Clarity in medieval and later Daoism resulted from the revelations of new bodies of teachings and practices that claimed the higher ranks in the hierarchy of the various forms of teaching. Earlier, in texts like the *Zhuangzi* and the *Huainan zi*, the Great Clarity had denoted in the first place the highest inner spiritual state, while in the Taiqing texts it is portrayed as the most exalted celestial realm, whose deities grant the revelation of the alchemical scriptures. The next chapter is devoted to an overview of these texts and their received versions in the Daoist Canon.

## THE GREAT CLARITY CORPUS

The Taiqing tradition was not based on a body of doctrinal tenets explicitly stated in its texts, and even less so was it provided with a formal organization of masters and disciples. Far from being a “school” in the sense of an established movement, it was originally centered on a set of key scriptures and practices, and developed through the addition of subsidiary texts and methods. Possibly for these reasons, there is no trace in any extant source of a catalogue or a list of Taiqing canonical scriptures. In time, however, the original corpus of writings was expanded with the enlargement of the older texts, such as the *Scripture of Great Clarity*, the addition of new ones, such as the writings related to the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, and the compilation of commentaries, such as the one on the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*.

Table 2 enumerates the fourteen extant sources that belong, or may be deemed to be very closely related, to the Taiqing corpus in its expanded version. These sources are divided into six groups, consisting of the three main original scriptures, the two early *waidan* texts found in the Shangqing corpus, other works on the Nine Elixirs, early related texts, Tang anthologies, and the nineteen-chapter commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*. For the reasons

TABLE 2  
*The Taiqing corpus in its expanded version.*

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MAIN SCRIPTURES OF THE EARLY TAIQING CORPUS
Scripture of Great Clarity ( <i>Taiqing jing</i> )
Scripture of the Nine Elixirs ( <i>Jiudan jing</i> )
Scripture of the Golden Liquor ( <i>Jinye jing</i> )
WAIDAN TEXTS IN THE SHANGQING CORPUS
Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles ( <i>Jiuzhuan huandan jing</i> )
Scripture of the Elixir Flower of Langgan ( <i>Langgan huandan jing</i> )
OTHER WORKS ON THE NINE ELIXIRS
Scripture of the Liquid Pearl in Nine Cycles and of the Nine Elixirs of the Divine Immortals ( <i>Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing</i> )
“Secret Written Instructions on the Elixirs of the Nine Tripods” (“Jiuding dan yin wenjue”)
“Songs” (“Ge”)
“Explanations” (“Jie”)
EARLY RELATED SOURCES
Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions ( <i>Sanshiliu shuifa</i> )
Scripture of the Divine Elixir of the Golden Liquor of Great Clarity ( <i>Taiqing jinye shendan jing</i> )
TAIQING ANTHOLOGIES
Essential Instructions from the Scripture of the Elixirs of Great Clarity ( <i>Taiqing danjing yaojue</i> )
Records from the Stone Wall of Great Clarity ( <i>Taiqing shibi ji</i> )
COMMENTARY TO THE SCRIPTURE OF THE NINE ELIXIRS
Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor ( <i>Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue</i> )

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mentioned above, these works should not be regarded as the “canon” of Taiqing scriptures; their enumeration is only meant to provide an overview of the written legacy of this tradition.

Moreover, the table includes only sources known to have existed around the seventh or the eighth century that are entirely or partly preserved in the present-day Daoist Canon. Besides them, the bibliographies of the Standard Histories list twenty-eight texts bearing the *Taiqing* prefix in their titles, and unofficial library catalogues compiled during the Song period add about a dozen. Based on what can be gathered from their titles, about half of these texts are likely to have dealt with alchemy. As most of them are lost, however, it is unclear whether the prefix indicates an actual association with the Taiqing tradition, or merely their inclusion into the identically named section of the Daoist Canon, which was initially devoted to the Taiqing tradition but whose connections with it became increasingly blurred in time.<sup>1</sup>

The present chapter introduces most of the texts listed in Table 2. Notes



on the other texts, and additional details on some of those mentioned here, are found below in Appendixes B and C.

### *The Scripture of Great Clarity and Its Commentary*

The main Taiqing text was the *Scripture of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing jing*). This work contained methods for making several elixirs, two of which are summarized by Ge Hong in his *Inner Chapters: the Elixir of Great Clarity* (*taiqing dan*) and the Elixirs of the Nine Radiances (*jiuguang dan*).<sup>2</sup> The text has not come down to us, but the Daoist Canon contains two works that claim, through their titles, to have close ties to it. The first, entitled “Preface to the *Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of Great Clarity*” (“Taiqing shendan jingxu”), purports to quote teachings of the Primordial Princess (Yuanjun) on the types and ranks of spiritual beings.<sup>3</sup> In her speech, the goddess emphasizes that the elixirs lead to transcendence but pertain to the domain of human beings; alchemy, therefore, reflects the human limitations compared to the condition of beings of pure spirit (*shen*), who do not need to devote themselves to its practice. But despite the importance of this text—even a *neidan* author, Chen Zhixu, quotes some sentences of it in one of his works<sup>4</sup>—and despite its attribution to the deity who, as we have seen, first revealed the three main Taiqing scriptures, there is no evidence that the “Preface” was part of the *Scripture of Great Clarity* as it existed in Ge Hong’s time. More likely, it is excerpted from one of the expanded versions of this scripture that we shall presently mention.

The extant work that is closest to the original *Scripture of Great Clarity* is the *Oral Instructions of the Celestial Master on the Scripture of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing jing tianshi koujue*). After an introductory section on the ceremony of transmission, this work contains two writings devoted to methods unrelated to each other. The first, entitled “Instructions on the *Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of Great Clarity*” (“Taiqing shendan jingjue”), contains quotations of, and notes on, parts of the original *Scripture of Great Clarity*. The second, entitled “Instructions on Medicines by Chisong zi to Keep at Hand” (“Chisong zi zhouhou yaojue”), is a dialogue between two immortals, Chisong zi and Yunyang zi, during which the former transmits the methods of the Three Powders and the Five Salves (*sansan wugao*) to the latter.<sup>5</sup> Like the “Preface” mentioned above, the three sections probably derive from one of the enlarged versions of the *Scripture of Great Clarity* that cir-

culated during the Six Dynasties, and were separated from it before the middle of the seventh century to form the present work. This date is suggested by the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* that quotes the passage on the ceremony of transmission from the introduction, the method of the Flowery Pond (*huachi*) from the first section, and the method of an apotropaic compound from the second section. As all quotations are attributed to the *Oral Instructions*, the introduction and the two texts must have formed an independent work before 650 CE.<sup>6</sup>

The Celestial Master mentioned in the title of the *Oral Instructions* is certainly Zhang Daoling himself, the beginner of the Way of the Celestial Masters (Tianshi dao), who in medieval times was said to have received a *Scripture of Great Clarity* in forty-six scrolls when Laojun granted him the revelations of 142 CE.<sup>7</sup> This is only one of the indications pointing to the high status of this text both within and outside the alchemical tradition. Around 500 CE, the *Scripture of Great Clarity* gave its name to one of the supplementary sections in the Daoist Canon.<sup>8</sup> In later times, it became the source of a sizable textual legacy: the original text, listed in some bibliographies as a work in one scroll and mentioned by Ge Hong as made of three scrolls, was expanded to twelve scrolls by the late tenth century, and to sixty-two scrolls by the twelfth century.<sup>9</sup> Chen Guofu has plausibly suggested that these enlargements resulted from the incorporation not only of other alchemical methods, but especially of miscellaneous writings on the practices of Nourishing Life (*yangsheng*).<sup>10</sup> Chen Guofu's suggestion is confirmed by the reflection of the contents of the extended *Taiqing jing* seen in the *Ishinpō* (Methods from the Heart of Medicine; 984), a tenth-century Japanese work that quotes several dozen passages and methods from a *Daqing jing* under various headings. Some of them, including breathing techniques, *daoyin* (gymnastics), abstention from cereals, and related disciplines, match the contents of texts bearing the *Taiqing* prefix in the present-day Daoist Canon, showing that after the decline of the Taiqing tradition, the Taiqing section of the Daoist Canon was used to accommodate texts on the practices of Nourishing Life.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Scripture of the Nine Elixirs and Early Related Writings*

The primary received version of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* (*Jiudan jing*) is found in the first chapter of the *Instructions on the Scripture of the*

*Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue*). It is followed by a commentary in nineteen chapters, compiled between 649 and 683 and written for Emperor Gaozong, who reigned in those years. A slightly variant version is included in the *Scripture of the Liquid Pearl in Nine Cycles and of the Nine Elixirs of the Divine Immortals* (*Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing*), dating from the early Tang period or shortly before.<sup>12</sup>

The *Nine Elixirs*, which is translated below in Chapter 9, is one of the few extant sources to give details on the entire ritual sequence of the alchemical practice, from the ceremony of transmission to the ingestion of the elixirs. It consists of three main parts, respectively concerned with: (1) an introduction about the revelation of the scripture, the benefits of the alchemical medicines, and various ritual rules; (2) the methods for making two preliminary compounds, called Mysterious and Yellow (*xuanhuang*) and Mud of the Six-and-One (*liuyi ni*); and (3) the methods and properties of the Nine Elixirs, which are nine separate preparations—an adept is not required to make and ingest all of them, but only one—related to each other by the main phases of their compounding and by the benefits that they grant.<sup>13</sup>

In the *Inner Chapters*, Ge Hong provides an extended summary of the introduction, followed by descriptions of the properties of each elixir. Both correspond to the received version of the *Scripture*.<sup>14</sup> Ge Hong's synopsis is quoted in four works in the Daoist Canon, testifying to the prestige that the *Nine Elixirs* enjoyed also beyond the *waidan* adepts.<sup>15</sup> This prestige is also attested by the existence of other texts based on the Nine Elixirs, which include two works in poetry, a short piece entitled “Explanations” (“Jue,” possibly derived from a lost third recension of the scripture) concerned with the first of the Nine Elixirs, and especially the “Secret Written Instructions on the Elixirs of the Nine Tripods” (“Jiuding dan yin wenjue”), which provides valuable details on all nine methods.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Scripture of the Golden Liquor and Its Namesake*

Ge Hong's summary of the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* (*Jinye jing*) omits important details of the method.<sup>17</sup> Some scholars have examined its chemical features, but not enough attention has yet been paid to the *Scripture of the Golden Liquid of the Divine Immortals, by the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature* (*Baopu zi shenxian jinzhuo jing*), which describes the same procedure in full.<sup>18</sup>

In the *Golden Liquid of the Divine Immortals*, which is translated below in Chapter 10, the recipe of the Golden Liquor—called Golden Liquid, or *jinzhuo*, in the title and in the introductory sentences, and Gold Water, or *jinshui*, throughout the rest of the text—is divided into thirty short passages, each of which is followed by the notes of an anonymous commentator. Two references to the change of the weight system between the Han and the Jin dynasties, found in the commentary, suggest that the original text does indeed date from the Han.<sup>19</sup> The place names used in the commentary show that it was written between the late fifth and the late sixth centuries, a dating confirmed by quotations from both the main text and the commentary in the *Essays for Ridiculing the Dao (Xiaodao lun)*, a Buddhist work written in 570.<sup>20</sup>

In later times, Golden Liquor came to designate within Chinese alchemy a type of elixir rather than a particular preparation, and many sources, including non-chemical ones, use this term to refer to the “elixir” in a general way. Remarkably different methods for preparations called Golden Liquor are found in several texts, whose relation to the original *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*, if any, is unclear.<sup>21</sup> One of the earliest of these methods is found the *Scripture of the Divine Elixir of the Golden Liquor of Great Clarity (Taiqing jinye shendan jing)*, which includes writings of different dates probably edited together before the Tang. Centered on two short sections that describe an alchemical method in heptasyllabic verse, this work contains a preface attributed to Zhang Daoling dating from before 500 CE, followed by annotations ascribed to his famous disciples Zhao Sheng and Wang Chang, and by several other methods.<sup>22</sup> The third and final chapter, dating from the early sixth century, contains an imaginary description of Western countries that produce minerals and other drugs.<sup>23</sup> Despite the early date of the materials contained in the first chapter, and despite the presence of the *Taiqing* prefix in the title, there is no indication that this work was part of the original *Taiqing* corpus. Ge Hong’s summary in his *Inner Chapters* shows beyond doubt that the received text containing the original *Taiqing* method of the Golden Liquor is the *Golden Liquid of the Divine Immortals*.<sup>24</sup>

### *The Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*

The first of the two early *waidan* works included in the Shangqing (Highest Clarity) corpus is the *Essential Instructions on the Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles of the Perfected of the Great Ultimate (Taiji zhenren jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue)*. As we know it today, this work consists of

three main parts. The first, which is translated in Chapter 11 below, contains the method of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles (*jiuzhuan huandan*).<sup>25</sup> The second part gives the recipes for two minor drugs, called Powder of the Four Fans of the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi sishan san*) and Powder of the Four Lads of the Queen Mother (*Wangmu sitong san*).<sup>26</sup> The third part consists of an account of five *zhi* plants grown by Mao Ying and his brothers on Mount Mao (Maoshan), the early seat of the Shangqing school.<sup>27</sup> Mao Ying's charismatic figure as one of the main Shangqing saints was crucial for the continued transmission of the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*, which entered the Shangqing corpus as part of his revealed biography and later was separated from it—apparently before the middle of the seventh century—to form the present text.<sup>28</sup>

The received version of the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* is presented as a revelation granted by Lord Wang of the Western Citadel (Xicheng Wangjun), one of the main Shangqing deities. He is mentioned in the opening sentence of the text and appears again at the end, where the method of the Nine Cycles is described as “Lord Wang’s oral instructions.”<sup>29</sup> This is the only feature in the entire text that points to its relation to the Shangqing school. The techniques used to compound the elixir, and the language used to describe them, correspond to those found in the three main Taiqing sources—especially the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*—suggesting that an earlier text was incorporated into the Shangqing corpus with the mere addition, or alteration, of two sentences containing Lord Wang’s name.

### *The Scripture of the Elixir Flower of Langan*

The second main early *waidan* text incorporated into the Shangqing corpus is now entitled *Divine, Authentic, and Superior Scripture of the Elixir Flower of Langan, from the Numinous Writ in Purple Characters of the Great Tenacity* (*Taiwei lingshu ziwen langgan huadan shenzhen shangjing*). As the title demonstrates, the text was once part of the *Numinous Writ in Purple Characters* (*Lingshu ziwen*), one of the central Shangqing scriptures which is extant as four separate works in the present Daoist Canon.<sup>30</sup>

As we have it today, the *Flower of Langan* describes an alchemical method performed in four stages. The product of the first stage—which is the Flower of Langan proper—undergoes further refinement in three later stages, and is finally buried under the earth. After three years, it generates a tree whose

properties equal those of the *langgan* plant that grows on Mount Kunlun, the Chinese *axis mundi*: its fruits, like those of that plant, confer immortality when eaten. While the language of the latter three parts closely reflects the Shangqing language and imagery, the first section again is close in contents, terminology, and style to the Taiqing texts, and describes a method similar to those of the *Nine Elixirs* and the other texts mentioned above. The heating process, in particular, is virtually identical to the one used for compounding the Nine Elixirs.

Earlier study of the *Flower of Langgan* has resulted in the suggestion of a possible “external influence” and an origin antedating the Shangqing revelations for this text, based on the deities that it mentions: the gods of the mountains and the earth (*shanshen* and *diqu*), the constellation of the Weaver (*zhiniü*), and the Count of the Waters (Shuibo).<sup>31</sup> When the text is read together with the Taiqing sources, the identity of the earlier, external influence becomes clear.<sup>32</sup>

### *Tang Anthologies*

The culminating point of a religious legacy is often marked by the compilation of anthologies and commentaries intended to make available a selection of materials wider than those found in the early, original sources. At the same time, collections and large exegetical works often signal the end of the creative stage of that legacy. The Taiqing sources dating from the Tang period illustrate both phenomena. These sources, consisting in two anthologies and in the nineteen-chapter commentary to the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, provide a wealth of materials for the study of *waidan* to the mid-eighth century. They were, however, all compiled at a time when the alchemical tradition in China had already taken other forms. These new trends in alchemical doctrines and practices, whose main features are examined in Chapter 12, finally led to the demise not only of the Taiqing legacy, but of *waidan* itself.

Besides the several dozen methods that they include, the two Taiqing anthologies contain another element of interest, as both of them are likely to derive from one of the enlarged versions of the *Scripture of Great Clarity*. The first anthology is the *Essential Instructions from the Scripture of the Elixirs of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing danjing yaojue*), attributed to Sun Simiao (fl. 673, traditional dates 581–682). Sun states in a preface that he selected

recipes that gave clear directions and that he had tested.<sup>33</sup> His work describes more than thirty methods. Among them is a method for luting the crucible similar to the one described in the *Nine Elixirs*, followed by detailed descriptions of each ingredient of the mud.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the *Essential Instructions* is one of three Taiqing texts that teach how to prepare a pellet used to ward off noxious spirits while one compounds an elixir.<sup>35</sup>

The second anthology is the *Records from the Stone Wall of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing shibi ji*), a collection in three chapters attributed to an Elder of the Moorlands of Chu (Chuze xiansheng). The five or six dozen recipes in this work are often followed by details on their healing properties, and the third chapter is mainly concerned with rules for ingesting the elixirs and with descriptions of their effects.<sup>36</sup> The text was edited during the Qianyuan period (758–59) of the Tang by an anonymous officer of Jianzhou (Sichuan), based on an earlier version attributed to Su Yuanming.<sup>37</sup> The legendary Su Yuanming, also known as Su Yuanlang, is said elsewhere to have retired on Mount Luofu (Luofu shan, Guangdong) at the end of the sixth century, and his name is also associated with one of the earliest allusions to *neidan* (inner alchemy).<sup>38</sup> This association rests only on tradition, but interestingly the present *Records* includes a Method for Making the Inner Elixir (“Zao neidan fa”) which, in spite of its name, clearly refers to a laboratory process.<sup>39</sup> The *Records* reproduces from the *Nine Elixirs* a list of favorable and unfavorable days to begin the compounding, and shares with the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* one of its methods for refining stalactites. Significantly, the latter method is quoted in the *Records* as coming from the *Scripture of Great Clarity* itself.<sup>40</sup>

Besides their formal similarities, other details show that Sun Simiao’s *Essential Instructions* and the *Records from the Stone Wall* are closely related to each other and draw on a common source. Many alternative names of the elixirs, usually listed in the *Records* with their recipes, are the same as those found in Sun Simiao’s *Essential Instructions*.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the *Records* gives the methods of four elixirs mentioned, but not described, in the *Essential Instructions*.<sup>42</sup> Further evidence on the relation between the two texts is provided by a short Tang treatise devoted to the alchemical *materia medica*, entitled *Instructions on an Inventory of Forty-five Metals and Minerals* (*Jinshi bu wujiu shu jue*). With only one exception, the fourteen short descriptions of minerals found in the third chapter of the *Records* correspond to those given in the *Inventory*, and four of them are also in the *Essential Instruc-*

tions. It is obvious that the *Inventory*, the *Records*, and the *Essential Instructions* drew their descriptions from the same source. The affiliations of the latter two texts with the Taiqing tradition make it very likely that this source is one of the expanded versions of the *Scripture of the Elixirs of the Great Clarity*.<sup>43</sup>

### *The Commentary to the Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*

For its rich content, its clear design, and its plain language, the *Instructions on the Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* (*Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue*) is one of the main sources for the study of Chinese alchemy. The chief criterion that inspired its anonymous compiler is an amplification of the major themes of the *Nine Elixirs* through extensive quotations from other works. This enabled him to produce a text in twenty chapters which, besides the portions focused on the *Nine Elixirs* itself (see Table 3), also includes large amounts of materials not directly related to it, making the commentary a *summa* of the Chinese alchemical tradition through the seventh century.

The phrases “Your subject remarks . . .” and “Your subject has heard . . .” (*chen an, chen wen*), which introduce several dozen paragraphs, suggest that the *Instructions* was compiled for an emperor. Other details support this assumption. The sovereign’s quest for the Dao is a major topic of the first chapter of the commentary, and the contemporary emperor’s beneficial influence on the world is also repeatedly mentioned.<sup>44</sup> In a passage stating that the commentary uses a plain language to make its understanding easier, the author says that he intends to “respectfully submit” (*gongfeng*) his work when it is completed; the phrase he uses implies that he would offer it to his ruler.<sup>45</sup> A further indication about the identity of the first recipient of the text is found in a passage quoted from Ge Hong’s *Inner Chapters*, where the terms “emperor and king” (*diwang*) and “empire” (*tianxia*) are replaced, out of respect for the emperor, with “duke and marquis” (*gonghou*) and “fief” (*fengji*):

If it is quality that you would discuss, then even the rank of emperor or king (*replaced with* “duke and marquis”) is not comparable with the method for attaining life in all its fullness. If it is quantity that you would discuss, then all the riches in the empire (*replaced with* “in a fief”) are not to be exchanged for this art.<sup>46</sup> (*Jiudan jingjue*, 6.1a)

Quotations of texts, mentions of personal and place names, use of measures of weight and volume, and respect of tabooed characters consistently show



TABLE 3

*Passages of the Jiudan jingjue concerning the Nine Elixirs. (References to passages directly quoted from the Scripture of the Nine Elixirs are marked with asterisks.)*

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2.1a, 2.5a	revelation of the scripture
7.2b (*), 10.6b	purifications and precepts
7.5a (*)	Mud of the Six-and-One
8.2b-3b	refining of mercury
8.4a	aqueous solution of realgar (method of the Mysterious and Yellow)
8.4a-b	aqueous solution of cinnabar (method of the Mysterious and Yellow)
8.9b-10a, 17.6a-b	Flowery Pond
10.6a, 10.6b	ceremony of transmission
10.6b-7a	purchase of the ingredients
12.1b (*)	synonyms of the Second Elixir
17.1a	preliminary methods
17.2a-b (*)	Mysterious and Yellow (quoted with variants)
17.3a-b	substitution of the Mysterious and White for the Mysterious and Yellow (method of the Eighth Elixir)
18.3b-4a	use of red hematite
18.4a	use of lake salt and Turkestan salt
18.5a-b	use of white lead in the method of the Mud of the Six-and-One
20.16b-17a	transmutation into gold
20.2a-b (*)	ceremony for starting the fire
20.3a-b	ritual
20.7a-15b	"Secret Written Instructions on the Elixirs of the Nine Tripods"

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that the commentary dates from between 649 and 683, and was written for Emperor Gaozong of the Tang, who reigned in those years.<sup>47</sup>

The anonymous author of the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* displays a remarkable mastery of the alchemical tradition. He has firsthand knowledge of the *waidan* practice, as he provides evidence of experience in compounding the elixirs. For instance, he had personally tested the methods for making the crucible and the luting mud, and had found them to be "perfect and sublime" (*zhimiao*). On the other hand, he notes that the methods for making aqueous solutions that replace unavailable ingredients with others do not give satisfying results. He also reports the different spans of time required in the methods for making solutions of alum given in the *Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions* (*Sanshiliu shuifa*) but points out that, upon testing, he had found all of them to require fifty days.<sup>48</sup>

The commentary can be divided into two main parts. The first part (chapters 2-6, 10, and portions of chapters 19 and 20) deals with the principles of alchemy and with the ritual aspects of its practice, such as the transmission of the texts, the entrance into sacred space and time, and various precepts and rules. The second part (chapters 7-9, 11-18, and the remaining portions of chapters 19 and 20) is concerned with the compounding of elixirs and with descriptions of their ingredients. The main sources are Ge

Hong's *Inner Chapters* for the background of the alchemical practice; the lost works attributed to Hugang zi for the methods; and Tao Hongjing's *Collected Commentaries to the Canonical Pharmacopoeia* (*Bencao jing jizhu*; ca. 500) for the descriptions of the elixir ingredients.<sup>49</sup>

The three main Taiqing scriptures and the two *waidan* texts preserved in the Shangqing corpus describe methods for compounding about a dozen elixirs, and provide details on the doctrinal foundations of the Taiqing tradition and on the ritual sequence of the alchemical process. The related sources mentioned in this chapter—especially the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*—add a wealth of additional information. Together, these texts make it possible to reconstruct the main doctrinal, ritual, and technical aspects of the Taiqing legacy. These three aspects are examined in the following three chapters of this book.



**Part Two**  
**The Elixirs of the Great Clarity**



## THE CRUCIBLE AND THE ELIXIR

This and the next two chapters of the present book are respectively devoted to the doctrinal, ritual, and technical features of Taiqing alchemy. The distinction among these features is in many ways artificial, as in several cases the single stages of the alchemical process—in particular, the heating of the elixir ingredients in the crucible—pertain at the same time to all three of them. However, only by distinguishing these aspects from each other is it possible to account for the multiple levels at which the alchemical process takes place.

While the ritual features of the alchemical process and the apotropaic and healing properties of the elixirs enabled *waidan* to develop in close association with other legacies and traditions of Jiangnan, the distinguishing trait of alchemy lies in the doctrines underlying the compounding of the elixirs. The central act of the alchemical process consists in causing matter to revert to its state of “essence” (*jing*), or *prima materia*. When the elixir ingredients are heated in the crucible, they go through the stages of development of the cosmos in a reverse order. The elixir is achieved when the ingredients reach a state deemed to be equivalent to the “essence” that spontaneously issues from the Dao and originates the world as we know it. The elixir, therefore, is not only a ritual object used for approaching the gods and expelling the

demons, or a “medicine” ingested for healing illnesses and prolonging life. It is, first of all, a symbolic token of the essence from which the formless Dao generates the world of form.

The crucial role in this achievement is played by the crucible. As we have remarked in the Introduction to this book, the early Taiqing texts do not correlate the ingredients to cosmological principles, and do not combine them in ways that represent the patterns of emblems commonly used to illustrate the relationship of the Dao to the cosmos (Yin-Yang, the Five Agents, the trigrams and hexagrams of the *Book of Changes*, and so forth). From a symbolic, ritual, and technical point of view, the entire alchemical process in the Taiqing tradition is supported by the crucible. Accordingly, the Taiqing texts point out that failure in the compounding of the elixirs is owed to mistakes made when preparing the vessel. In particular, they repeatedly emphasize that the crucible must be hermetically sealed, for even the most minute opening would cause the “precious treasure” (*zhongbao*, i.e., the essence) of the ingredients to volatilize and be lost. The “precious treasure” is the essence that forms the elixir.

### *The Word Dan (Elixir)*

To look at the doctrines underlying the alchemical process as it is described in the Taiqing texts, we must first take a step back and examine some general features of the notion of elixir in early Chinese alchemy. Xu Shen’s *Shuowen jiezi* (Elucidations of the Signs and Explications of the Graphs; 100 CE) defines the graph *dan* (written 凵 or 凵) as formed by two parts, one meaning “cavity” or “well” (*jing*), and another consisting in a dot (*zhu*) that represents its center or something contained or hidden within it.<sup>1</sup> While Xu Shen merely explains *dan* as “a scarlet stone found in Ba and Yue” (*Ba Yue zhi chishi*, with reference to regions corresponding to parts of present-day Sichuan and Zhejiang, respectively), the legacy of the later philologists is gathered in the main Chinese and Japanese lexical repertoires. These list four generally accepted meanings of *dan*:<sup>2</sup>

1. The color cinnabar (Jp. *ni*), scarlet (*chi*, Jp. *akai iro*), or light scarlet (Jp. *usu-akai iro*).
2. The mineral cinnabar, also called *zhusha* “vermilion powder,” defined as “a red stone formed by the combination of quicksilver and sulphur.”<sup>3</sup>
3. Sincerity (*chixin*; Jp. *magokoro*, corresponding to Ch. *zhenxin*).

4. “An essence obtained by the refining of a medicinal substance”; “a refined medicinal substance (*seiren yakubutsu*), the so-called medicine of the seekers of immortality for avoiding aging and death; a term often used for matters concerning the immortals.”<sup>4</sup>

Tracing a common origin for the four meanings requires that we examine the respective contexts.

In its first meaning (the designation of a color), *dan* is part of a range of words that denote different shades of red. The five main terms are *hong* (red), *dan* (cinnabar), *zhu* (vermilion), *chi* (scarlet), and *jiang* (crimson).

In the second meaning (the mineral cinnabar), *dan* commonly appears in the compound *dansha*, literally meaning “cinnabar sand.” Besides this standard term, cinnabar is also denoted by several synonyms and secret names, among which we can mention here, in view of the discussion that follows, Vermilion Powder (*zhusha*), Real Vermilion (*zhenzhu*), Lustrous Powder (*guangming sha*), Essence of Fire (*huojing*), Essence of the Sun (*rijing*), Great Yang (*taiyang*), and Powder of the Accomplishment of the Yang (*yangcheng sha*).<sup>5</sup>

For the third meaning (sincerity, fidelity, loyalty), several dictionaries quote Zhang Zilie’s *Compendium of Correct Characters* (*Zhengzi tong*; 1627), which defines *dan* as denoting “a heart that is sincere (lit., scarlet) and devoid of artifices” (*chixin wuwei*). The expression “cinnabar heart” (*danxin*) in the sense of “sincerity” is attested at least from the third century CE, while the synonym “scarlet heart” (*chixin*) appears about five centuries earlier.<sup>6</sup> Other expressions of identical or close meaning are “treasure of cinnabar” (*danbao*), “true like cinnabar” (*dankuan*), “sincere like cinnabar” (*dancheng*), and “essence of cinnabar” (*danjing*).<sup>7</sup>

According to the traditional philologists, the meaning of “elixir” originated later, based on the other acceptations of the word *dan*. Zhu Junsheng (1788–1858) states that “in later times the essence (*jing*) of the medicinal stones was also called *dan*.”<sup>8</sup> Duan Yucai (1735–1815) is somewhat more explicit on the shift of meaning from “essence” to “elixir”: according to his glosses, “*dan* is the essence of the stone, therefore the essence of all medicinal substances is called *dan*.”<sup>9</sup>

These definitions, synonyms, and related terms show that the semantic field of the word *dan* evolves from a root-meaning of “essence.” Its connotations include the reality, principle, or true nature of an entity or its essential part, and by extension the cognate notions of oneness, authenticity, sincerity, lack of artifice, simplicity, and concentration. This semantic field is



also represented by other words belonging to three phonetic series associated with the one that contains *dan*.<sup>10</sup> The first series includes *dan* (single, alone, simple) and *dan* (a simple garment). The second includes *dan* (sincere, real, true), *tan* (simple man), and *dan* (bare). The third includes *tan* (level, smooth), *dan* (only, merely, simply), and *tan* (bare). These additional terms also pertain to the meaning of *dan* as “essence,” in the sense of the single most basic, significant, and indispensable element, attribute, quality, property, or aspect of a thing.

### *The Notion of Elixir and Its Associations*

Considering the root-meaning and the multiple connotations of the word *dan* helps us to better appreciate how Chinese alchemists understood the meaning of their work. Lexical analysis, however, can only point to, but cannot account for, the symbolic associations that exist among the different notions and entities that we have mentioned above.

These associations play a cardinal role in framing the notion of elixir. The symbolism of the color red builds in part on the importance of blood, whose circulation is a sign of life. In addition to this, and more important, red is the color of the heart, the symbolic center of the human being. This center, immaterial and intangible, has multiple locations that correspond to each other; besides the heart, it also resides above and below it, in the regions of the brain and the abdomen. These three loci are named Cinnabar Fields (*dantian*), with reference not to the mineral cinnabar, but to the color red: the earliest text to provide a lengthy description of the lower Field, the *Central Scripture of Laozi* (*Laozi zhongjing*), represents it as red (*chi*) in the center, green on the left, yellow on the right, white above, and black below.<sup>11</sup> Significantly, the *Central Scripture* defines this red locus within the body as the storing place of *essence*, whose primary material aspects in human beings are semen in men and menstrual blood in women.

These and similar associations based on the color red, in turn, are part of a larger and more complex background that is worthy of attention. A suitable starting point to examine this background is the association of the word *dan* with red entities such as the sun, fire, and cinnabar itself. As we have seen, some synonyms and secret names of cinnabar—including Lustrous Powder, Essence of Fire, Essence of the Sun, Great Yang, and Powder of the Accomplishment of the Yang—allude to the relation of cinnabar to the Yang

principle, light, and the sun. Alchemical texts that use the language of correlative cosmology define this association according to the system of the Five Agents (*wuxing*), where cinnabar corresponds to the agent Fire. Ancient Chinese religious ideas and practices related to the color red, however, show that additional explanations are possible.

#### LIGHT

Several decades ago, Max Kaltenmark showed the relation that occurs between the earliest known traditions of immortality and a pattern of equally ancient beliefs documented by literary and iconographic sources. These sources have transmitted descriptions and images of the immortals as transcendent beings provided with feathers and wings that enable them to fly and rise to heaven.<sup>12</sup> As is well known, this feature is also indicated by the phonetic element in the original graph for the word *xian* (“immortal, transcendent”), which denotes “rising in flight by moving the arms as wings.” The first traditions about the immortals show analogies to the myths of the Feathered Men (*yuren*), whose lands lay along the coastal regions of China and who were the progenitors of the Yi clan. The Yi are sometimes called Wuyi or Zhuiyi (Yi Birds), and their ancestor was a bird—a pheasant or perhaps a pelican. At the same time, the names of their mythical forefathers reveal their solar character: Great Light (Taihao), Small Light (Shaohao), Yang-in-High (Gaoyang), and Light of the East (Dongming).

Like the divine ancestors of these peoples, the Daoist immortal was a “feathered man.” Moreover, as Kaltenmark remarks, “becoming similar to the gods meant not only going back to their winged essence, but also becoming a glowing being: the ancient kings had birds as their emblems, but they were also Suns.” The solar and luminous character of the immortal was emphasized when he attained his transcendent state by ingesting an elixir: according to some texts, taking an elixir makes one’s body as radiant as the sun.<sup>13</sup>

Of an even greater interest and relevance in our context are the southern traditions of the Chu region, which associate immortality with the sun and the light. In the *Far-off Journey* (*Yuanyou*) poem of the *Elegies of Chu* (*Chuci*) “the poet-magician feeds on solar effluvia . . . he visits the Feathered Men (the immortals) on the Cinnabar Mound (Danqiu), the country of the people who do not die; he washes his hair in the Tanggu, the valley where the sun rises at dawn; at night he exposes his body to the brilliance of the

Nine Yang (the Nine Suns). . . .”<sup>14</sup> The second-century commentator on the *Elegies* Wang Yi writes that the Cinnabar Mound is a place “eternally luminous, both by day and night.”<sup>15</sup> This brings to notice a little-studied theme in Chinese religion, namely, the idea of objects, places, or mythical beings of perpetual light—a light that is inherent to them and therefore goes beyond the opposition of light and darkness, or of day and night.<sup>16</sup> Cosmologically, this notion is expressed by the term Pure Yang (*chunyang*), which refers to the state beyond, and before, the separation of the One into Yin and Yang. The elixir, *dan*, represents this state, as does the Cinnabar Mound, Danqiu. Kaltenmark also notes the parallel between the Cinnabar Mound and Mount Cheng (Chengshan, Shandong), on which was a City Without-Night (Buye cheng) inhabited by the Feathered Men (i.e., the immortals).<sup>17</sup> We may add that a daughter of the mythical Emperor Shun was called Shines-in-the-Night (Xiaoming), which is also the name of a plant; and that one of the two animals that led Emperor Yu to Fu Xi carried a pearl called Light-of-the-Night (*yeming*).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, as is the case with the Cinnabar Mound and the city on Mount Cheng, continuous light by day and night characterizes the Cavern-Heavens (*dongtian*) believed to exist hidden within some of the major mountains. Tao Hongjing writes about them that “inside there is brightness in the dark, and radiance during the night.”<sup>19</sup>

The plant Shines-in-the-Night and the pearl Light-of-the-Night also remind one of the *zhi*, mushroom-like excrescences of a transcendent nature that only adepts recognize as such, while they are not even noticed by common people. A permanent light characterizes some of them. For instance, the *zhi* called Elephant of Stone (*shixiang*) emanates a light that is “visible at one hundred feet by night.” The *zhi* of the Seven Brilliances and the Nine Radiances (*qiming jiuguang*) issues a brightness that “resembles that of the stars; by night those lights are visible at a distance of one hundred feet, and each beam can be clearly distinguished from the others, spreading out without merging with the others.” Upon ingesting these two *zhi*, “one’s body becomes so bright that the place where one lives becomes similar to the moon, and like the moon is visible at night.”<sup>20</sup> According to Ge Hong, these and other *zhi* were similar to natural elixirs, and adepts could search and ingest them to obtain immortality. One of the elixirs mentioned in his work, the Elixirs of the Nine Radiances (*jiuguang dan*), shares its name with the *zhi* of the Seven Brilliances and the Nine Radiances.<sup>21</sup> A synonym of cinnabar mentioned above, Lustrous Powder (*guangming sha*, or more literally, Brilliant and Radiant Power), refers exactly to the same qualities.

AUSPICIOUS SIGNS, APOTROPAIC POWERS

Other sources provide further details on the symbolism of the color red. Its uses in clothing, architecture, and war implements show that red was the color associated with political authority and its celestial origins before yellow took its place.<sup>22</sup> At least until the Han period, important documents were written in red, including oracular bones, which have yielded traces of cinnabar.<sup>23</sup> The same was true of the talismans and the scriptures that Heaven bestowed upon virtuous sovereigns. One of the best-known examples of these writings, often collectively referred to as “cinnabar writs,” or *danshu*, is the *Writ of the Luo River (Luoshu)*, which contained diagrams written in red.<sup>24</sup> Another famous “cinnabar writ” was brought by a red bird to the King of Wu (Wuwang): this was the *Scripture of the Five Talismans (Wufu jing)*, one of the major texts of early Daoism.<sup>25</sup> Several other auspicious signs sent by Heaven are also qualified by the word *dan*; for instance, *danshi* (cinnabar stone) is another talisman, and a “cinnabar bird” (*danniao*) also appeared to King Wen (Wenwang) when he became the ruler of the Zhou.<sup>26</sup>

Red objects were also used in exorcistic rites. A custom practiced on the day of the summer solstice, when the power of Yang is at its peak, consisted in hanging a piece of red silk on the doors to prevent demons from entering. This rite may be compared to a passage found in the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*: “Marking the doors with the Fixed Elixir (*fudan*), the hundred calamities, the myriad sprites, and the *chimei* and *wangliang* demons will dare not come before you.”<sup>27</sup> For analogous reasons, corpses were painted with cinnabar or other red pigments, especially iron oxide and minium.<sup>28</sup> The protective and auspicious powers of the color red are also referred to on a jar, found in a tomb dated 133 BCE, bearing an image of the sun painted in red and an inscription also written in red (Fig. 1):

The essence of Great Yang obtains its power from the sun.

From cinnabar (*dansha*) one acquires benefit and obtains one hundred blessings.

According to the statutes and the ordinances!<sup>29</sup>

The jar is almost exactly contemporary to the alchemical method that Li Shaojun suggested to Emperor Wu.<sup>30</sup>

RED AND THE YANG PRINCIPLE

Other aspects the association between the color red, the mineral cinnabar, and the Yang principle are also of importance for our subject. Several sources

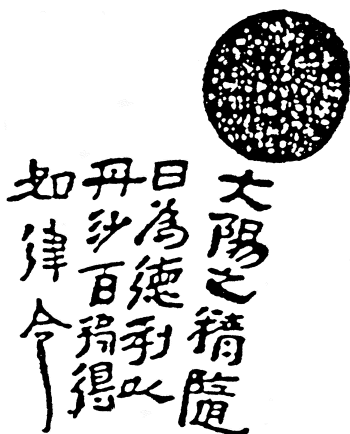


FIGURE 1 Inscription on a jar from a tomb in Huxian (Shaanxi), dated 133 BCE. From Zhuo Zhenxi, “Shaanxi Huxian de liang zuo Hanmu,” 47.

document early cults and rites addressed to the sun, which is red and is an emblem of light.<sup>31</sup> One of the names of the sun is *dansha wan*, literally meaning “cinnabar pill.”<sup>32</sup> *Dan* “elixir” is a homophone of *dan* “dawn,” a detail that may be relevant not only for the phonetic identity of the two words, but also because the elixirs were typically ingested at dawn, facing the rising sun.<sup>33</sup> Liu An (179–122 BCE) writes that “the essence of the fire’s breath (*qi*) is the sun,” and Wang Chong (27–97 CE) similarly states that “the sun is the essence of fire.”<sup>34</sup>

Related symbolism is found in several alchemical texts. Chen Shaowei (fl. early eighth century) echoes both Liu An and Wang Chong when he says: “Cinnabar is the perfect essence of the Great Yang” (*taiyang*, i.e., among the celestial bodies, of the sun), and “the root-origin of spiritual brightness (*shenming*).”<sup>35</sup> His work concerns the preparation of an elixir in seven cycles, the qualities of which are deemed to be increasingly Yang, that is, luminous and solar. Also, according to the *Scripture of the Liquid Pearl*, “the essence of fire becomes the planet Mars above, and cinnabar below.” The same text states that “the Great Yang is cinnabar, which is born from the sun, which in turn is born from fire; cinnabar therefore is the son of fire and the sun.”<sup>36</sup> In works that describe elixirs obtained from lead and mercury, the elixir is usually called “gold” (*jin*), but its attributes are the same

as those of cinnabar. According to Zhang Jiugai (fl. mid-eighth century), for instance, “gold is the essence of the sun.”<sup>37</sup>

### *The “Precious Treasure”*

As we have seen, the word *dan* has a root-meaning of “essence” and denotes the authentic nature of a thing or its essential quality or aspect. This root-meaning is illustrated by the multiple associations of the color red. First, red is associated with light and the sun, both of which in turn are related to the Yang principle. Second, red is the color of auspicious objects sent by Heaven, and especially of revealed (i.e., *authentic*) scriptures and of talismans. Third, the color red is provided with protective and apotropaic properties. While some of these notions are expressly associated with cinnabar, they are transferred to the elixir via the term *dan*, which denotes both.

This understanding of the notion of “elixir” and its associations clarifies some central features of Taiqing alchemy that are only alluded to in its scriptures. Besides being provided with protective and apotropaic properties, the elixir incorporates and represents the authentic essence that is hidden in and animates matter. This essence represents the timeless, eternal instant in which the Dao generates existence; it represents, in other words, the notion of “origin” in all of its possible aspects, and within it are included all the possible states of manifestation generated by the Dao. Cosmologically, it is a Yang substance, but not in the sense that it represents the principle complementary to Yin: as the Radiant Light goes beyond the opposition between light and darkness, so too the essence that forms the elixir incorporates both Yin and Yang and therefore represents Pure Yang, the state prior to the division of the One into the two.

In the Taiqing texts, as we have said, the role of supporting these doctrinal notions is not performed by the base ingredients, but by the crucible itself. The two compounds used for luting the vessel before it is heated play a crucial role in this regard. The first is the Mysterious and Yellow (*xuan-huang*), a compound made of refined mercury and refined lead, which is also often added to the elixir ingredients as the upper and lower layers within the crucible. The *locus classicus* of the term Mysterious and Yellow is a sentence found in one of the appendixes to the *Book of Changes*, which states: “Mysterious and Yellow means the mingling (*za*) of Heaven and Earth: Heaven is Mysterious (*xuan*) and Earth is Yellow (*huang*).”<sup>38</sup> Through this compound,

therefore, the crucible and the elixir embody and merge the essences of Heaven and Earth. The importance of the Mysterious and Yellow in the methods of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* is also shown by the relation of its name to those of the three deities who first transmitted the scripture—the Mysterious Woman (Xuannü), the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi), and the Mysterious Master (Xuanzi).<sup>39</sup>

An even more important function is performed by the second luting compound, the Mud of the Six-and-One (*liuyi ni*), which is typically obtained from seven ingredients. Revealing that this compound plays another role besides the one of preventing the crucible from breaking upon contact with fire, the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* glosses its name by saying: “Six and one is seven: the sages keep this secret, and therefore call it Six-and-One.” Significantly, the commentary adds that the mud is so called even when the number of ingredients is different from seven.<sup>40</sup> “Six and one,” therefore, does not refer only to the number of the ingredients. The prominent role played by this compound in the alchemical process is also illustrated by one of its synonyms, Divine Mud (*shenni*).<sup>41</sup>

The name and the function of the Mud of the Six-and-One become clearer in the light of the notions that we surveyed in the first part of this chapter. Using different images and idioms, some early texts describe or allude to the generation of the cosmos from the Dao as a process that happens in seven stages. Directly pointing to the intent of these descriptions, the *Zhuangzi* outlines the process in reverse, starting from the phase preceding manifestation and receding to its most remote inception:

[7] There is a beginning. [6] There is a time before the beginning. [5] There is a time before the time before the beginning. [4] There is being. [3] There is non-being. [2] There is a time before non-being. [1] There is a time before the time before non-being. (*Zhuangzi*, 5/2/49–51)

This passage forms the basis of a more elaborate description in the *Huainan zi* that may be summarized as follows:

- [7] At the stage of the *beginning*, things are still in an embryonic state and are not yet formed, but there is an impulse to life.
- [6] At the stage of the *time before the beginning*, the pneuma (*qi*) of Heaven begins to descend and the pneuma of Earth begins to rise, and Yin and Yang join.
- [5] At the stage of the *time before the time before the beginning*, Heaven and Earth are not yet separated, and things are in an indistinct state.

- [4] At the stage of *being*, the germs of the ten thousand things (*wanwu*) appear for the first time.
- [3] At the stage of *non-being*, there are no forms and sounds, no matter and limits, and there “is” only pure Light (*guangyao*).
- [2] At the stage of the *time before non-being*, the only describable condition is that of “great pervasiveness” (*datong*), nothing existing outside it and nothing inside it.
- [1] At the stage of the *time before the time before non-being*, there is absolute undifferentiation, a condition in which even Light would “retreat and evade from itself” (*tui er zishi*).<sup>42</sup>

The seven stages of the *Zhuangzi* and the *Huainan zi* all precede manifestation, and are transmutative phases happening within the inchoate state often denoted as *hundun* (original or primordial chaos). Another famous passage in the *Zhuangzi* uses different imagery to represent the same notions. The seven stages of cosmogony are portrayed there as seven openings pierced in the body of Emperor Hundun (“Chaos”) by the Emperor of the North and the Emperor of the South. The emergence of duality, symbolized by the two emperors, causes the death of Hundun and the shift from chaos to cosmos:

The Emperor of the South was called Shu. The Emperor of the North was called Hu. And the Emperor of the Center was called Hundun. Shu and Hu at times mutually came together and met in Hundun’s territory. Hundun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu, then, discussed how they could reciprocate Hundun’s virtue saying: “Men all have seven openings in order to see, hear, eat and breathe. He alone doesn’t have any. Let’s try boring him some.” Each day they bored one hole, and on the seventh day Hundun died.<sup>43</sup> (*Zhuangzi*, 21/7/33–35)

The practices described in the Taiqing texts are based on the reversal of the process alluded to in the passages quoted above. The Mysterious and Yellow and the Mud of the Six-and-One allow an alchemist to re-create the primordial inchoate state within the crucible. The Mysterious and Yellow represents the state before the emergence of duality, while the ingredients of the Mud of the Six-and-One, using the metaphor of the *Zhuangzi*, serve to close the seven openings that caused the death of Emperor Hundun—whose “body” is the crucible itself. Re-creating the primordial inchoate state within the crucible makes it possible for essences of the ingredients to be released through the action of fire, rise, and coagulate themselves in the elixir under the upper half of the vessel. The very shape of the crucible reminds one of the condition of primeval chaos, often portrayed by the image of a gourd that



holds within a world apart comparable to that of primordial times: the shape of a round vessel closed by another round vessel is the shape of a gourd.<sup>44</sup>

Only in a perfectly sealed vessel is it possible to reproduce the state prior to the “ten thousand things,” causing matter to reveal its original, authentic state. As stated in one of the Taiqing texts, even leaving an opening “as big as the nose of an ant” on the crucible would result in the failure of the whole alchemical undertaking:

Carefully examine the crucible, and do not let any crack or opening remain. If there is a single breach even as thick as a hair, or as big as the nose of an ant, the Medicine volatilizes and entirely disappears. If the Medicine loses its subtle and divine components (*jingshen*), if it loses its heavenly and earthly essences, all you would obtain is a stone. Once its precious treasure (*zhongbao*) is lost, it would be of no efficacy, and its ingestion would have no benefit. (*Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing*, 1.6b)

In the commentary to the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, the “precious treasure” mentioned in the passage quoted above is equated to the “essence” which, as is said in the *Laozi*, is at the center of the Dao and is the seed of existence.<sup>45</sup>

Released from all corrupted aspects owed to the action of time, the purified matter that constitutes the elixir is an analogue of the essence that gives birth to the “ten thousand things,” or the world of multiplicity. Instead of establishing correlations between the ingredients and cosmological principles, as done in the later alchemical tradition in China, the Taiqing texts assign a crucial symbolic role in the task of reverting matter to *prima materia* to the crucible and in particular to the luting mud. The elixir and the crucible, thus, are at the center of the entire doctrinal import of the alchemical process. These notions constitute the foundation of the two other main aspects of the alchemical process, namely those concerned with ritual and with technical procedures, to which the following two chapters are devoted.

## THE RITUAL SEQUENCE

As we have seen in the previous chapter, compounding an elixir restores the state prior to the emergence of time. When the ingredients are placed in the crucible, matter reverts to its state of essence, which is equivalent to the essence (*jing*) spontaneously issued from the Dao, the seed of existence. The Taiqing texts share this understanding of the purport of the alchemical process with all Chinese *waidan* sources. What distinguishes them from other works is the parallel emphasis that they give to the rites and the ceremonies performed at the single stages of the practice. Together with the underlying doctrines, these rites and ceremonies distinguish alchemy from a mere set of technical procedures. The adept is instructed to comply with several ritual prescriptions, such as those for receiving texts from his master, for choosing a proper time and place to perform his practice, for building and protecting the laboratory, for kindling the fire, and even for purchasing the ingredients. The compounding of the elixirs is preceded by invocations to the highest divinities, and their ingestion also requires the observance of ritual rules. This chapter provides an outline of the ritual sequence of the alchemical process, reconstructed on the basis of several Taiqing sources.

### *Ceremony of Transmission*

The alchemical process begins with the ceremony of transmission, performed in order to receive texts and oral instructions (*koujue*). As stated in the commentary to the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, without the written instructions (*wenjue*) one would be unable to remove the toxicity of the ingredients, but the oral instructions are necessary to understand the meaning of the written instructions. More important, states the commentary, one should not assume that the alchemical practice simply consists in following the recipes found in the texts: the compounding of the elixirs is often unsuccessful precisely because the more important aspects of the practice are not delivered in writing, and this indeed is why Liu Xiang and Tao Hongjing failed in their alchemical endeavors.<sup>1</sup>

The ceremony of transmission described in the Taiqing sources is similar to rites documented in early Daoist texts. The adept must swear a covenant (*meng*) and establish a bond (*yue*, a word that in other contexts denotes a legal contract) with his master, and provide tokens (*xin*) that prove his commitment to receiving the texts and instructions and to keeping them secret. At the end of the rite, he and his master ratify their reciprocal obligation by smearing their mouths with blood, which is sometimes replaced by cinnamon (a further example of the symbolic association between the color red and the notions of sincerity and loyalty that we have discussed in the previous chapter).<sup>2</sup>

To receive the methods of the Nine Elixirs, the disciple throws golden figurines of a man and a fish into an east-flowing stream as tokens of his oath (*shi*).<sup>3</sup> The same rite is performed to receive the method of the Golden Liquor:

The *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* says: “Throw a golden figurine of a man weighing eight ounces into an east-flowing stream, and utter an oath after drinking some blood. Only then you may receive the oral instructions.”  
(*Baopu zi*, 4.83)

The tokens offered to receive the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* are a golden figurine of a fish and a jade ring shaped like a dragon. Both are said to replace the rites of smearing one’s mouth with blood and of having one’s hair cut. If the golden figurine and the jade ring are not available, they may be replaced with hemp fabric and silk:<sup>4</sup>

To receive this divine scripture and the instructions on the elixir, make a bond [with your master] and undertake the purification practices. Sanction the covenant with an oath, using a golden figurine of a fish weighing eight ounces and a dragon-shaped jade ring. These replace the oath made by having your hair cut and smearing your mouth with blood. But these sacred arts (*lingshu*) cannot be kept forever secret. Therefore, if you are unable to find those objects, you may replace the token of the golden fish with forty feet of fine azure hemp fabric, and the token of the dragon-shaped jade ring with forty feet of heavy silk. Give both of them as offerings. (*Jiuzhuan huan-dan jing yaojue*, 5a)

Hemp fabric and silk are also offered to receive the *Scripture of Great Clarity*. Its commentary says:

Following the Writs of Codes and Covenants (*kemeng shu*) one uses eight ounces of yellow gold, forty feet of yellow hemp fabric, eight ounces of white silver, and forty feet of white silk as tokens. The transmission cannot take place more than once in one hundred years. The covenant is sealed smearing one's mouth with blood, and should be kept secret.<sup>5</sup> (*Taiqing jing tianshi koujue*, 1a)

The *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* enjoins the master who transmits the scriptures to donate part of the received tokens to his own master, give another part as alms, and use the rest as ritual objects, never taking advantage of them for personal benefit.<sup>6</sup>

The ceremony of transmission also marks the disciple's commitment to not revealing the teachings and texts he has received. The passage quoted above from the commentary to the *Scripture of Great Clarity* continues by describing the penalties administered for improper transmission:

If you disregard the Codes without a reason, or transmit these instructions to one who is not fit to receive them, or do not comply with them and disclose them, the Celestial Sovereign (Tianhuang) will banish you from immortality, and you eternally will have to confess your faults on the Dark Road (*xuanlu*). The City of the Immortals of the Great Mystery (*taixuan xiandu*) will muddle your mind and confuse your thoughts, and all your endeavors will end in failure. The Nine Old Lords of the Immortals (*Jiulao xianjun*) will upset your essence and spirit (*jingshen*), and whatever you devote yourself to will not bear fruit. The Director of the Registers of the Great One (*Taiyi silu*) will not enter your name in the registers of life (*shenglu*), and the Director of Destinies of the Three Heavens (*Santian siming*) will decrease your span of life. Your faults will be extended to your an-

cestors to the seventh degree, and they will receive punishment in the City of the Great Mystery.<sup>7</sup> (*Taiqing jing tianshi koujue*, 1a–b)

After the disciple has made his offerings, the transmission rite of the *Nine Elixirs* continues with directions to arrange a seat for the Mysterious Woman near the east-flowing stream, so that the goddess may descend and look upon the ceremony. Details on a presumably similar device are found in the commentary, which describes the construction of a seat for the Great One (Taiyi) used for the same purpose. Each side of the seat is three feet and six inches long, and two feet and eight inches high. The seat is covered with a mat, on which one places a three-foot-long piece of silk.<sup>8</sup> Then, according to the *Nine Elixirs*, the master burns incense and announces to Heaven that he intends to transmit the alchemical teachings and texts to his disciple. Before handing down the scripture and the oral instructions, he waits for a sign of consent from the Mysterious Woman. If the sky is clear and there is no wind, master and disciple seal their covenant by drinking together the blood of a white chicken.<sup>9</sup>

### *Retirement and Purifications*

Having received the texts and the oral instructions, the adept retires to a mountain or an isolated place. He is accompanied by two or three attendants, whose main tasks are pounding the ingredients and tending the fire:

The compounding can be performed by three persons who share the same heart and love the Way, are devout and trustworthy, are not vulgar or lewd, and are firm in their intentions. If it is difficult to find three such persons, two may be enough. They should all undertake the purification practices, observe the precepts, and perform the ablutions.<sup>10</sup> (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 4b)

No more than three people, states another *Taiqing* text, can help the adept: if there are more, “their hearts would not be unanimous.”<sup>11</sup>

As shown by the passage quoted above, all those involved in the compounding of the elixir should first perform the preliminary purification practices (*zhai*). The consecrated place is built on a mountain slope near an east-flowing stream, and is designated as a “pure chamber” (*jingshe*), a term that also denotes the room where a Daoist adept performs meditation practices.<sup>12</sup> When one compounds the *Nine Elixirs*, the purification practices are per-

formed three times: before receiving the methods for an unspecified number of days, before purchasing the ingredients for seven days, and before compounding the elixirs again for seven days.<sup>13</sup> According to other texts, it is completed in one hundred days, or in two stages of forty and one hundred days, respectively.<sup>14</sup>

At the beginning of the purification practices, as is said in a passage of the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* also found in the *Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions*, the adept should purify the ritual area:

On the day on which you undertake the purification practices, first toss five bushels of pure liquor (*qingjiu*) into a stream that flows near your dwelling. If there is no stream, you can toss the liquor into a well. This is done to pacify the pneuma of the earth (*diqui*). Regularly drink some of that water during the purification practices. (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 5a; *Sanshiliu shuifa*, 111a)

The *Flower of Langgan* describes a similar ceremony performed at the end of the purification practices. At that time, the alchemist utters an invocation:

When you have finished your purification, take three bushels of pure liquor and toss them into an east-flowing stream. Gazing down at the water, incant, saying:

Azure flow of Great Mystery,  
Eight Seas and Nine Rivers,  
Gods of the Mountains, Spirits of the Earth,  
Protect from above the essence of the elixir!  
Now with fine liquor, three full bushels,  
I respectfully sacrifice to the River Spirits (*heling*).

When you have finished incanting, return without looking back and, on that day, place the drugs in the crucible.<sup>15</sup> (*Langgan huadan shangjing*, 2a–b)

No further details are available on the purification practices, except that they involve burning incense (the “five fragrances,” *wuxiang*) and making ablutions (*muyu*).<sup>16</sup>

#### CHOICE OF TIME

Much attention is devoted in the Taiqing texts to the rules that determine the choice of time to start the retirement. All these rules are based on calendrical taboos, and many of them specifically on the auspicious and inauspicious relations that occur among the Five Agents (*wuxing*), the Celestial Stems

(*tiangan*), and the Earthly Branches (*dizhi*). In spring, for instance, Wood “rules” (*wang*), Fire “assists” (*xiang*), Water “rests” (*xiu*), Metal is “imprisoned” (*qiu*), and Earth “dies” (*si*). The best relation among the Agents is the one between “ruler and assistant” (*wangxiang*). In spring, accordingly, the most auspicious days are those whose first and second cyclical markers are associated with Wood (*jia* or *yi*) and Fire (*wu* or *si*), respectively.<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that these basic emblems of correlative cosmology are used in the Taiqing texts only to determine the time for starting the retirement and, as we shall see below, for kindling the fire; they are not used to define the relation of the ingredients of the elixirs, or of the elixir itself, to cosmological principles.

Other favorable days are those defined as “protective” (*bao*, whose cyclical markers correspond to two Agents, the first of which generates the second, e.g., Wood-Fire), “righteous” (*yi*, whose cyclical markers correspond to two Agents, the second of which generates the first, e.g., Water-Metal), or “responsible” (*zhuan*, on which no details are given). The adverse days are those said to be “controlled” (*zhi*, whose cyclical markers correspond to two Agents, the first of which conquers the second, e.g., Earth-Water) or “subdued” (*fa*, whose cyclical markers correspond to two Agents, the second of which conquers the first, e.g., Wood-Metal).<sup>18</sup>

The days marked by the characters *jiazi*, *jiawu*, *jiayin*, *yihai*, *yimao*, *yisi*, *bingxu*, *bingwu*, and *bingchen* are also said to be auspicious.<sup>19</sup> Retiring on one of the Five Peaks to compound the elixirs or perform other practices, on the other hand, is contraindicated in the season associated with the direction of that mountain during the years marked by a cyclical character corresponding to the same direction. For instance, one should not enter the Eastern Peak in the spring of a year marked by *jia*, *yi*, *yin*, or *mao*, because these characters are associated with the east.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, in the months of thirty days, one should not enter a mountain on the third, eleventh, fifteenth, eighteenth, twenty-fourth, twenty-sixth, and thirtieth days; and in the months of twenty-nine days, one should not enter a mountain on the first, fifth, thirteenth, sixteenth, twenty-sixth, and twenty-eighth days.<sup>21</sup> Finally, in the twelve months of the year, the days marked by the following cyclical characters are tabooed: first month, *wu*; second month, *hai*; third month, *jia*; fourth month, *wu*; fifth month, *xu*; sixth month, *shen* and *mao*; seventh month, *jia* and *zi*; eighth month, *jia* and *wu*; ninth month, *yin*; tenth month, *chen*; eleventh month, *yi*; twelfth month, *chou*.<sup>22</sup>

## Precepts and Taboos

The ritual nature of the alchemical work is also emphasized by a large number of precepts and taboos. The *Nine Elixirs* states that before compounding the elixir one should not approach filth and dirt, and should not enter houses inhabited by young women or where mourning is being observed. Moreover, one should not disclose one's intentions to "the envious, those who talk too much, and those who do not have faith in this Way."<sup>23</sup> The *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* gives similar rules:

From the day on which you undertake the purification practices, you should discontinue the common human activities, so that you may devote yourself entirely to making the elixir. . . . [You and your companions] should not approach sickness and filth or see corpses. Domestic animals also must be carefully avoided. (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 4b)

Several other rules, dictated by the Mysterious Master (Xuanzi) who first received the *Nine Elixirs* from the Yellow Emperor, are listed in the commentary to this text under four headings: the Five Interdictions (*wuji*), the Three Taboos (*sanhui*), the Four Calamities (*sibai*), and the Six Adversities (*liuwei*). The Five Interdictions concern days on which the compounding of the elixir and related actions should not take place. These are

1. The Days of the Death of the Five Stones (*wushi siri*), i.e., *renchen* in spring, *guiwei* in summer, *bingxu* in autumn, and *dingchou* in winter. On these days, the essences of the minerals are "submitted and congealed" (*fujie*), and they do not release their efflorescence (*hua*).
2. The Days of the Life of the Five Evils (*wuxie shengri*), i.e., *renyin* in spring, *guisi* in summer, *renshen* in autumn, and *guihai* in winter. On these days, one should not buy the elixir ingredients, expound the teachings, or enter a mountain.
3. The Days of the Extinction of the Five Peaks (*wuyue shangjue ri*), i.e., *gengyin* in spring, *guiwei* in summer, *bingshen* in autumn, and *dingchou* in winter. On these days, spirits inspect the *hun* (earthly soul) and the *po* (celestial soul) of the human beings, and compounding the elixirs and searching for the ingredients are both forbidden.
4. The Days of the Opening of Heaven and the Cracking of Earth (*tiankai dipo ri*), i.e., *bingxu* and *bingshen* in spring, *xinwei* and *xinchou* in summer, *renchen* and *renxu* in autumn, and *guiwei* and *guichou* in winter. On these days, making the crucible and compounding the elixirs are forbidden.



5. The third day and the *jiayin* day of the seventh month for men, and the seventh day and the *gengshen* day of the first month for women. On these days, the essences of the minerals fight against each other, and no one should compound an elixir.<sup>24</sup>

According to the Three Taboos, one should

1. Stay away from those who are enduring suffering or adversity.
2. Not forget to utter the name and the cognomen of the Killer Bandit (*shazei*), who is a demon detrimental to the elixir. His name is Shicong zi and his cognomen is Hun Nixi.
3. Stay away from ill or dying people, and from newborn children.<sup>25</sup>

The Four Calamities are

1. Frequent tremors in the area where the elixir is compounded, even if they are only caused by the passing of chariots.
2. Seeing envious people.
3. Thunderclaps that shake the crucible.
4. Sour and hot flavors, and the smell of burned skin of chicken or dog. Moreover, if one hears a thunderclap, one should immediately cover the crucible with a wet cloth to prevent the essences of the elixir from being dispersed.<sup>26</sup>

The Six Adversities are

1. Wind, rain, and thunder.
2. Hearing the “summoning sounds of the *hun* and the *po*” (*huan humpo sheng*).
3. [No details given.]
4. [No details given.]
5. Hearing lamentations and weeping.
6. Seeing rotten or bleeding things.<sup>27</sup>

#### PURCHASE OF THE INGREDIENTS

Rules and taboos also govern the purchase of the elixir ingredients. According to the *Nine Elixirs*, after seven days of purification, one should buy the medicines “on an appointed day and in a place governed by the Virtue of the Month (*yuede*),” without bargaining over the price.<sup>28</sup> The commentary explains that there should be a correct correspondence between space and time, determined by the relation between the Earthly Branches associated with the place and with the month in which the ingredients are bought. For instance,

in the first month one should choose a *wei* day, in the second month a *shen* day, and so forth for the other months and Branches. As for places, on a *jia* day one should select a *shen* place, on a *yi* day a *geng* (likely to be an error for *you*) place, and so forth. In addition, one should not buy the ingredients from someone who is observing a mourning period.<sup>29</sup>

### *Delimitation and Protection of Space*

The practices concerning the establishment of the ritual area focus on its delimitation, purification, and protection. Space should be purified and protected to guard oneself from the dangerous demons who inhabit the mountains. This can be achieved by the mere possession of major scriptures like the *Script of the Three Sovereigns* (*Sanhuang wen*), the *Charts of the Real Forms of the Five Peaks* (*Wuyue zhenxing tu*), or the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, which enable one to summon the gods and obtain their protection.<sup>30</sup> To drive away spirits and demons, one should also be able to identify them and shout their names, or to recognize those that, in days marked by certain cyclical characters, appear under the guise of human beings or wild animals.<sup>31</sup> According to the *Supreme Secret Essentials* (*Wushang biyao*), the *suqi* (Nocturnal Invocation) rite for the protection of ritual space can also be performed when one compounds the elixirs.<sup>32</sup>

However, as is stated in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*, the most effective way to protect the compounding of the elixirs is to use talismans (*fu*) and seals (*yin*).<sup>33</sup> These are worn on one's body, affixed at the four directions, placed along the path that leads to one's dwelling, thrown in the stove, or made into ashes and drunk with water before one compounds the elixirs.

#### DRIVING AWAY THE DEMONS

Two examples show how the Taiqing adepts used talismans. Referring to the rules for the establishment of the ritual area, three Taiqing sources mention a compound called Medicine for Expelling the Demons (*quegui yao*) or Pellet for Expelling the Demons (*quegui wan*). Several ingredients of this compound are poisonous vegetable substances whose apotropaic properties are also mentioned in the pharmacopoeias. One of the recipes is found in the commentary to the *Scripture of Great Clarity*, which mentions the Pellet together with the identically named Talisman for Expelling the Demons (*quegui fu*):

When you compound the great medicines, you should always stay in a quiet place in the mountain forests. Build the Chamber of the Great Medicines (*dayao shi*) and hang four swords at its four sides. Then make the Pellet for Expelling the Demons and the Talisman for Expelling the Demons. You should affix and hang them [inside the Chamber]; if you do not do so, when the time comes to compound the great medicines their essence and pneuma (*jingqi*) would be inhaled by the demons. This is why you should protect the medicines by driving away noxious demons and spirits.

Method for making the Pellet for Expelling the Demons: Take equal quantities of cinnabar (*zhusha*), realgar (*xionghuang*), orpiment (*cibuang*), tortoise shell (*guijia*), black veratrum root (*lilu*), peach pits (*taoren*), aconite tuber collected in spring (*wutou*), aconite tuber collected in autumn (*fuzi*), great bulb of *pinellia tuberifera* (*da banxia*), poison ivy (*yege*), sulphur (*shiliuhuang*), croton seed (*badou*), fresh rhinoceros horn (*sheng xijiao*), umbrella leaf (*guijiu*), musk (*shexiang*), spindle tree wings (*guijian*), and dried centipedes (*wugong*). Pound these seventeen ingredients and sieve them, mix them with the juice of anise follicles, and make pellets the size of the yolk of a hen's egg. When you compound the medicines of immortality, hang one pellet within the four walls [of the Chamber]. If you burn one pellet, the hundred demons will run away. If you burn one more pellet, you will kill all of them. Keep this method secret, as it is very effective! (*Taiqing jing tianshi koujue*, 14a)

A similar recipe for the Pellet for Expelling the Demons is found in Sun Simiao's anthology of Taiqing methods, the *Essential Instructions from the Scripture of the Elixirs of Great Clarity*. The corresponding talisman is not reproduced either in the commentary to the *Scripture of Great Clarity* or in Sun Simiao's work, but is found in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* (see Fig. 2) together with a third similar recipe for the Pellet.<sup>34</sup>

#### THE TALISMANS OF THE JADE TERRACE

The second example concerns the five talismans of the "Yellow Emperor's Writ of the Jade Terrace" ("Huangdi yutai pian"). Their reproductions in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* (see Fig. 3) are introduced by a rite taught by the August Man (Huangren) to the Yellow Emperor. In this rite, after an adept has performed the purification practices for one hundred and fifty days, he makes the Decoction of the Five Fragrances (*wuxiang tang*) with spring water, powdered white millet, cinnabar, honey, and ashes of a mulberry tree. The decoction is placed at the center of a "pure chamber." Then the adept draws the five talismans, arranging those of the four directions

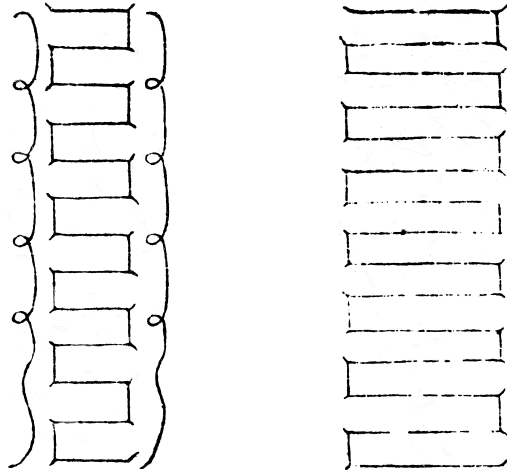


FIGURE 2 Talisman for Expelling the Demons (on the right, a variant of its inner part).

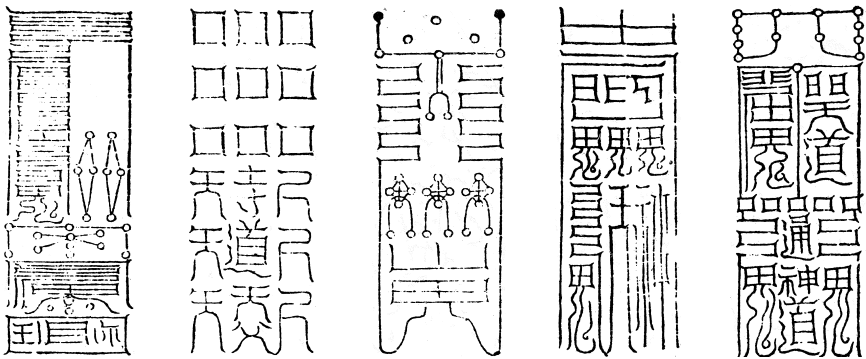


FIGURE 3 Talismans of the Jade Terrace.

around the vessel containing the decoction, and hanging the talisman of the center three feet above the vessel. He leaves the chamber and then enters again, walking the Pace of Yu (*yubu*) and holding his breath. After he exhales his breath over the decoction and pays homage to the five talismans, he pours the decoction over his own body to purify himself. Then he wears clean clothes, places the talismans of the four directions on his body, and ingests the talisman of the center.

After seven days of further purifications and ablutions, the text continues,

a supernatural light fills the chamber. The adept should not be afraid of it, continuing to guard the One (*shouyi*) until a divine being (*shenren*) appears and grants teachings. The adept also should wear the Five Talismans on his own body when he searches for the elixir's ingredients, and should bury them at the four sides and underneath the furnace when he compounds the elixirs.<sup>35</sup>

#### OTHER SETS OF TALISMANS AND SEALS

Besides the Talisman for Expelling the Demons and the five talismans of the Jade Terrace, the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* reproduces five other sets of talismans and seals and provides explanations on their materials, sizes, colors, and uses. Several of them also appear in Ge Hong's *Inner Chapters*, but both the illustrations and the accompanying texts contain variants, sometimes substantial, compared to Ge Hong's work.

- i. Talismans for Summoning the Lords of the High Mountains during the Retirement on a Mountain (*ru mingshan jizhao gaoshan jun fu*; Fig. 4).<sup>36</sup>

This set includes seven talismans:

- i. Talisman for Summoning the Lords of the High Mountains and protecting oneself against wild animals.
- ii. Talisman for Ascending the Mountains (*dengshan fu*), which wards off noxious essences, demons, and wild and dangerous animals. In ancient times this talisman was used by the immortal Chen Anshi.<sup>37</sup>
- iii. Variant of the previous talisman.
- iv. Talisman to be worn on one's body (men on the left, women on the right side), to be affixed in one's dwelling in the four directions, or to be taken along when traveling.<sup>38</sup>
- v. Secret Talisman of the Thirty-nine Perfected of the Yellow Court of Lord hao (*Laojun huangting sanshijiu zhen bifu*), to be affixed in the place where one compounds an elixir.<sup>39</sup> The appended text says that the elixirs should be compounded inside a cavern in the depths of a mountain, away from people and domestic animals, and near an east-flowing stream. If it is not possible to compound them in a cavern, one may dwell in the depths of a mountain; if it is not possible to stay in an uninhabited place, one may retire to a "pure chamber"; if an east-flowing stream is not available, one flowing to the west is permitted.
- vi. Talisman to be affixed at the four sides and the four corners of one's dwelling, and at fifty steps away from it along the paths that one threads when one retires on a mountain.<sup>40</sup>

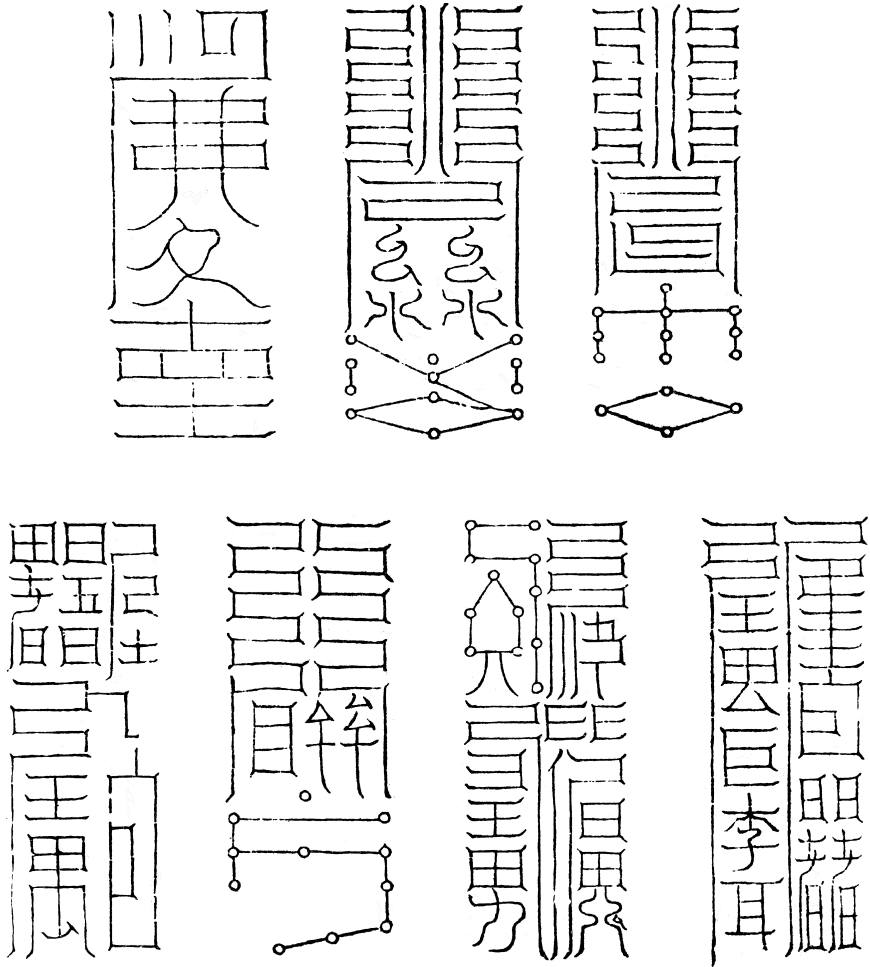


FIGURE 4 Talismans for Summoning the Lords of the High Mountains during the Retirement on a Mountain.

- vii. Talisman for keeping away wild animals.
- 2. Seals for Warding Off the Hundred Snakes and Talismans for Driving Away the Wild Animals (*pi baishe yin ji neng que hulang bu fan fu*; Fig. 5).<sup>41</sup>

This set includes six seals and talismans:

- i. Two Divine Seals (*shenyin*) to be worn on one's body.
- ii. Seal for keeping away wild animals, which can also be used as a talisman and ingested.

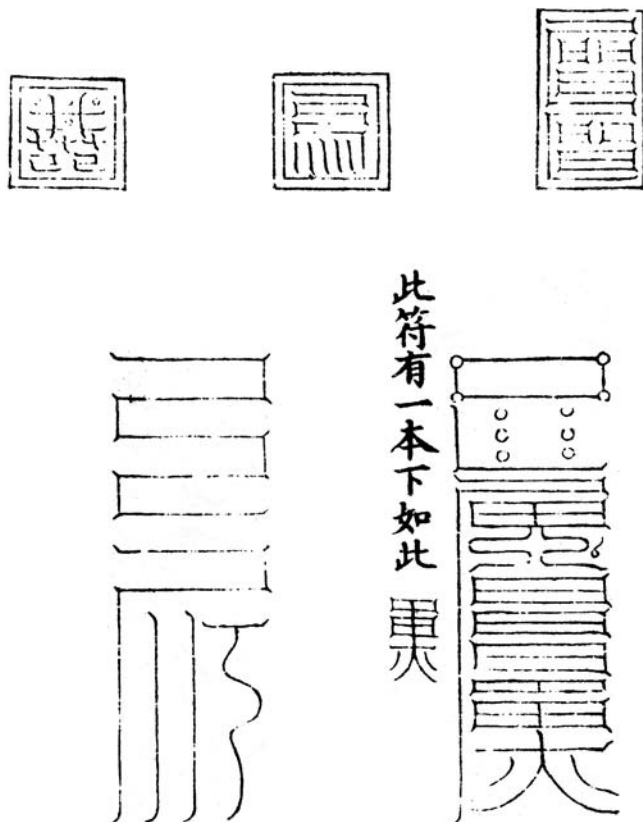


FIGURE 5 Seals for Warding Off the Hundred Snakes and Talismans for Driving Away the Wild Animals. (For talismans 2.iii and 2.iv, see Fig. 2.)

- iii. Talisman for expelling demons, to be affixed at the four directions during the compounding of an elixir (see Fig. 2).<sup>42</sup>
  - iv. Variant of the inner part of the previous talisman.
  - v. Talisman for Dwelling on the Mountains (*shanju fu*), to be affixed to the four corners of a door in order to keep away the wild animals.
  - vi. Illustrations (including a variant of the lower part) and instructions for making the Talisman for Opening the Mountain (*kaishan fu*). This talisman not only enables one to control spirits and demons but also causes the “gates of the mountain” (*shanmen*) to open and yield scriptures and elixir ingredients.<sup>43</sup>
3. Methods for averting evil influences during the compounding (*hebe fangpi fa*; Fig. 6).<sup>44</sup>

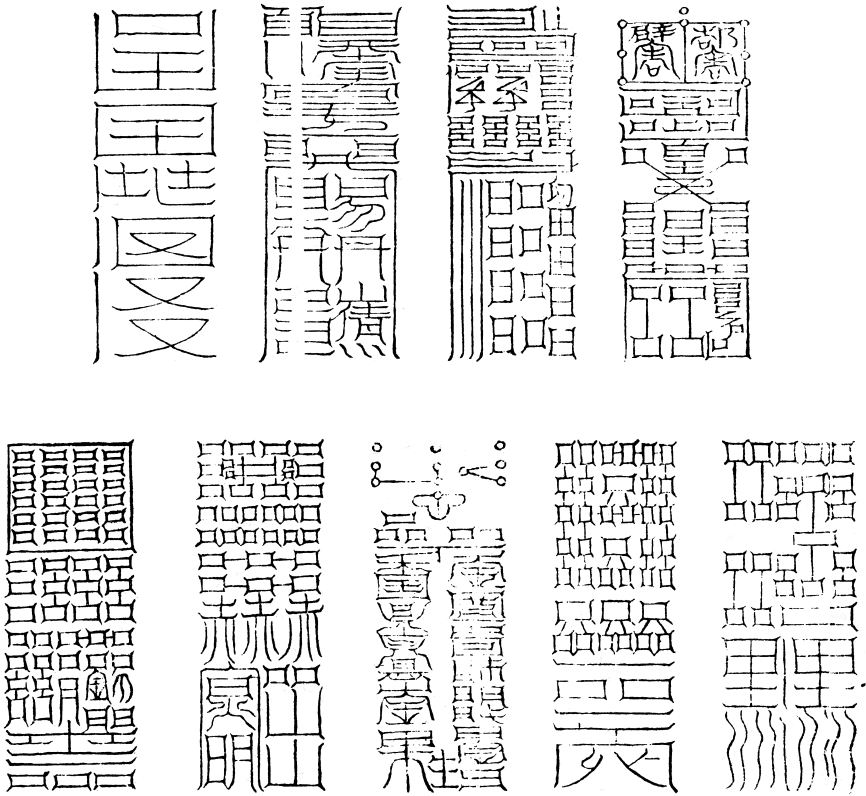


FIGURE 6 Methods for averting evil influences during the compounding.

- i. Talisman used for asking the Lord of the Central Peak (*Zhongyue jun*) whether one can start compounding an elixir.
- ii. Eight-Inch Silk Talisman of the Great One (*Taiyi bacun sufu*), used by Laozi when he compounded the elixirs.<sup>45</sup>
- iii. Talisman that, if ingested, “opens the heart” (*ling xin kai*) of the adept.<sup>46</sup>
- iv. Talisman for Warding Off Harm (*quehai fu*), which one should throw in the furnace in order to submit it (*fu*).
- v. Talismans of the Five Gods (*wushen fu*, i.e., the Emperors, *di*, of the Five Directions), which ensure success in the compounding of the elixirs. These talismans are received by paying one’s respects to the Highest Sovereign Lord of the Dao (*Shanghuang Daojun*). They can be ingested or worn on one’s head and should be prepared ten days before making the elixirs. Ge Xuan (Ge Hong’s granduncle) received both these and the previous four talismans.<sup>47</sup>



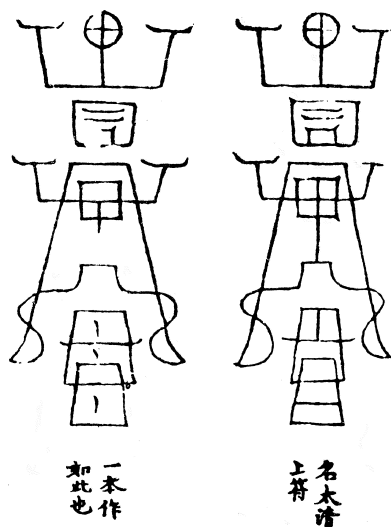


FIGURE 7 Jade Contract of the Nine Old Lords.

4. Jade Contract of the Nine Old Lords (*Jiulao yuquan*; Fig. 7).<sup>48</sup>

When one compounds an elixir, one should pour some liquor into a stream to avert the evil influences of the earth's pneuma, and should celebrate a ceremony for the deities. However, if one obtains the Jade Contract of the Nine Old Lords, all such ceremonies become unnecessary. According to the appended text, this talisman is also called Authentic Register of the Eight Simplicities (*basu zhenlu*), or Superior Talisman of the Great Clarity (*taiqing shangfu*). When an adept begins his purification practices, he draws two of these talismans on a piece of green silk, and utters an invocation to ask that the compounding be successful. Then he takes one of the talismans and places it in a bag of green silk, which he hangs on his own body so that the talisman is over his heart. The other talisman is cut into two halves. One is thrown into a stream near one's dwelling, the other is buried underneath the furnace.

5. Precious Talisman for Warding Off Evil (*baozhen fu*; Fig. 8).<sup>49</sup>

This talisman, also called Great One's Credentials of the Count of the Immortals (*Xianbo Taiyi jian*) or Eight-Inch Talisman (*bacun fu*),<sup>50</sup> is drawn in green on the crucible on the day on which one starts the purification practices, or on a *jiazi* or a *jiayin* day, while standing toward the east. An iden-

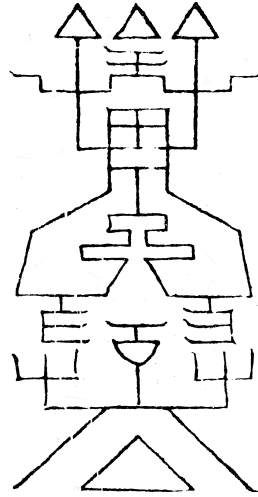


FIGURE 8 Precious Talisman for Warding Off Evil.

tical talisman is drawn on a piece of white silk. At the end, one utters an invocation.<sup>51</sup>

### *Building the Laboratory*

Directions for building the alchemical laboratory, which is typically called Chamber of the Elixirs (*danshi*, or *danwu*), are found in both the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* and the *Flower of Langgan*. According to the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*, an adept retires to a mountain after he has received the method and has performed the purification practices. He builds the laboratory (here called Chamber of the Divine Stove, *shenzao wu*) and places the furnace (*lu*) inside it, with an iron stand to hold the crucible. The adept should make sure that the Chamber does not touch the ground and is not built over an old well or a tomb:

Build the Chamber of the Divine Stove near an east-flowing stream. The Chamber should be forty feet long, twenty feet wide, and its foundation should be four feet from the ground. First dig the earth for a few feet; if you do not find an old well or a tomb, you can raise the foundation there. The Chamber should have three doors, facing south, east, and west. Place the stove in the center, with the mouth facing west. Arrange an iron stand inside the stove and set the crucible on it, so that it is nine inches from the

walls of the stove. Cover the stove with bricks plastered with fine clay. (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 1b–2a)

The *Flower of Langgan* gives a similar method:

For building the foundation of the furnace ground, you should first dig to a depth of three feet, removing the contaminated soil and replacing it with clean loam, ramming it to make it firm. The foundation to be built on this level surface should be two feet five inches in height. Do not build your furnace on the site of an old grave mound or residence. The furnace chamber should be thirty feet long, sixteen feet wide, and sixteen feet tall. It must be pure, clean, and well constructed. Roof it with fragrant grasses, and plaster the walls both inside and out so that they are sturdy and secure. There should be two doors, four feet wide, covered with curtains, that face east and south. Only the head alchemist and the person who watches on the fire are to stay in this chamber.

The furnace is to be placed in the center of the room. The mouth of the furnace should face east. The furnace is to be constructed of fine bricks, mortared together. Then pound white clay and the hair of oxen, horse, and river deer into vinegar and east-flowing stream water to make plaster for the furnace. Set the crucible of the medicines on an iron stand that has been placed inside the furnace. The crucible should be set in the center of the furnace, with all four sides three and a half inches from the sides of the furnace. The furnace should rise two feet above the top of the crucible, with the bottom of the crucible one and eight-tenths feet off the floor.<sup>52</sup> (*Langgan huadan shangjing*, 3b–4a)

Both methods quoted above are also found in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*, which calls them Method for Making the Chamber to Sublimate the Elixirs (“Feidan zuowu fa”) and Method for Making the Stove (“Zuozaofa”), respectively. The author of the commentary, however, adds that these were “old methods.” By his time, he says, it was enough to eliminate the contaminated soil, build a mound of clean loam, and bury a talisman under the crucible.<sup>53</sup>

According to another method found in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*, the Chamber of the Talismans (*fushi*) should be built near an east-flowing stream. Its length is twelve paces and its height is twenty-four feet, and it has one door facing south. The walls are plastered with “fragrant mud” (*xiangni*), and talismans are affixed at the four sides. At the center one arranges the layered alchemical altar (here called Three Terraces, *santai*, from the name of a constellation formed by six stars below the Northern

Dipper) and the supports for the crucible (here called the Five Peaks, *wuyue*, the designation of the five sacred mountains). On the western side, one places the ingredients of the elixirs and the scriptures.<sup>54</sup>

### *Kindling the Fire*

When all the preliminary requirements have been fulfilled, the adept selects the proper time for compounding the elixir. The entire preliminary process for making the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles should be timed so that one kindles the fire at dawn on the ninth day of the ninth month.<sup>55</sup> The *Nine Elixirs* and three other early texts give a list of auspicious and inauspicious days to begin the compounding; despite variants in the indication of inauspicious days among them, the common origin of the passage is apparent.<sup>56</sup> Among the days indicated as unfavorable are those of Establishment (*jian*), of Receiving (*shou*), and of the Killer of the Month (*yuesha*).<sup>57</sup> The most favorable days are the fifth of the fifth month and the seventh of the seventh month,<sup>58</sup> followed by the days of Opening (*kai*) and of Removal (*chu*).<sup>59</sup> The compounding can also begin in the days whose cyclical signs are in a relationship of “ruler and assistant” and do not “subdue” each other; moreover, the sky should be clear, and the sun and the moon should be bright.<sup>60</sup>

Now the fire may finally be started. In the *Nine Elixirs*, this stage is also marked by a ceremony. The alchemist invokes the Great Lord of the Dao (Da Daojun), Lord Lao (Laojun), and the Lord of the Great Harmony (Taihejun). He offers them food and drinks, and asks them to watch over the process, let the practice be successful, and let him become an accomplished man (*zhiren*) and have audience at the Purple Palace (Zigong), in the constellation of the Northern Dipper.<sup>61</sup>

The commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* describes a more complex rite, called Ceremony of the Nine Elixirs (*jiudan ji*), which is performed before kindling the fire. The adept first sets up an altar, nine feet wide in the lower part and four feet wide in the upper part, and places the stove six feet west of the altar. On the altar he arranges five pieces of silk, placing one piece of dried meat and one cup of liquor on each of them. On a seat to the east of the altar he arranges nine pieces of silk, placing two pieces of dried meat and two cups of liquor on each of them. He also offers millet, dried meat of ox and sheep, boiled carp, cooked eggs, jujubes, pears, and oranges or other red fruits. Burning some incense, he pours liquor into the cups. Then he kneels

in front of the seat, and after this he may start the fire. The offerings are moved near the crucible, and more dried meat and liquor are placed on three tables. The meat should be replaced once every three days, and the liquor three times a day.<sup>62</sup>

### *Consecration and Ingestion of the Elixir*

After all the preliminary rites are performed, the compounding of the elixir may begin. The alchemist's attention now focuses on the crucible and the fire, and he performs the method according to the texts and the oral instructions he has received from his master, helped by his assistants. When the elixir is achieved, according to the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*, he performs again the ceremony made before the kindling of the fire, adding more pork meat on the altar, and cooked rice, a cooked chicken, and a dried carp in the seat to the east of the altar. Finally, having asked permission to do so with an invocation, he opens the crucible.<sup>63</sup>

Ge Hong quotes a ceremony performed before ingesting the Elixir of Great Clarity. In this rite, different quantities of the elixir are offered to Heaven, celestial bodies, and deities, and another portion is left in the marketplace for the benefit of those who cannot devote themselves to its compounding:

After you achieve gold, take one hundred pounds of it and arrange a major ceremony. For the procedure there is a separate scroll, but this is not the same ceremony as the one performed for compounding [the elixirs of] the Nine Tripods. For this ceremony you separately weigh and arrange different quantities of gold.

You offer twenty pounds to Heaven, five pounds to the Sun and the Moon, eight pounds to the Northern Dipper (*beidou*), eight pounds to the Great One (Taiyi), five pounds to the god of the well, five pounds to the god of the stove, twelve pounds to the Count of the River (Hebo), five pounds to the god of the soil (*she*), and five pounds each to the spirits and the divinities of the doors, of the house, of the village, and to the Lord of Clarity (Qingjun). This makes eighty-eight pounds altogether. With the remaining twelve pounds, fill a beautiful leather bag, and on an auspicious day silently leave it in a very crowded spot of the city market, in the peak hour. Then leave without turning back. (*Baopu zi*, 4.76–77)

No other source besides the *Inner Chapters* has preserved a description of this rite; the very large amounts mentioned by Ge Hong raise doubts about the accuracy of his report.

The final act of the alchemical process is also marked by ceremonies. The *Nine Elixirs* repeatedly recommends that one should ingest the elixir after undertaking further purification practices, observing the precepts, and performing ablutions for five weeks. The elixir is typically ingested at the dawn of a *jiazi* day, the first of a sexagesimal cycle: the adept burns some incense, pays obeisance to the gods, and bows down facing east. According to the commentary, he should not ingest the elixir on cold, windy, or rainy days, if the sky is dark, or if there is an overabundance of dew. Moreover, he should dwell in a pure and quiet place and abstain from sour foods, sexual intercourse, and the rites of mourning.<sup>64</sup> The *Flower of Langan* gives simpler rules: at the dawn of a day of the new moon in the eleventh, the fourth, or the eighth month, the adept should ingest an ounce of elixir with water taken from an east-flowing stream.<sup>65</sup>

The ritual sequence described above is reconstructed based on details found in different Taiqing texts. While the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* is the source that provides the most complete account, the other texts mention only some of the ritual steps that should be performed. The single texts, however, give coherent details, and the differences that exist among them are less substantial than the details of the techniques that they describe. These techniques, which represent the central part of the process performed by the Taiqing adept, are examined in the next chapter.

## THE MEDICINES OF GREAT CLARITY

At the core of the early Taiqing tradition are about a dozen elixirs (*dan*) or “medicines” (*yao*). The Taiqing texts also refer to them as *huandan*, a term sometimes translated as “cyclically transformed elixir” but more literally meaning “reverted elixir.” The use of this term reveals the underlying purpose of the alchemical process in the Taiqing tradition, which we have discussed in Chapter 4 above. *Huandan* has two main senses in *waidan*, where it denotes an elixir obtained either by refining mercury from cinnabar, or by joining refined mercury and refined lead. In the first instance, mercury (Yin) is refined from cinnabar (Yang), added to sulphur (Yang), and refined again. This process, typically repeated nine times, yields an essence deemed to be entirely devoid of Yin and thus to incorporate the qualities of Pure Yang (*chunyang*), the state of oneness before Yin and Yang arise. In the second instance, refined mercury (Real Yin, *zhenyin*) is refined from cinnabar (Yang), and refined lead (Real Yang, *zhenyang*) is refined from native lead (Yin). The elixir produced by joining refined mercury and refined lead to each other is also equated to Pure Yang. None of the Taiqing compounds—including the fourth of the Nine Elixirs, even though its name is Reverted Elixir—is based on either of these processes. In the Taiqing texts, the term *huandan* indicates

that the elixir has been obtained by causing its ingredients to revert (*huan*) to their original condition of “essence” (*jing*).

This chapter examines some aspects of the methods for making elixirs in the Taiqing scriptures. The purpose of this survey is not to account for all the technical details involved in compounding the Taiqing elixirs—in particular, their chemical aspects—but only to illustrate their nature and their main features, within the limits and the perspectives of the present book. After a presentation of the major techniques shared by different texts, the rest of the chapter deals with the methods found in the three main Taiqing scriptures and in the two early *waidan* texts received as part of the Shangqing corpus.

### *Shared Methods Among the Taiqing Texts*

Compounding an elixir requires an alchemist and his helpers to apply techniques for making, filling, luting, heating, and finally opening the crucible. Many of these techniques are shared by different Taiqing texts, contributing to their unity and coherence, and the texts frequently refer to each other for directions on a particular method. For instance, the commentary to the *Scripture of Great Clarity* gives instructions for making the crucible, saying that the luting mud should be prepared according to the method found in the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, and that the crucible should also be used for compounding all the other major Taiqing elixirs. The ingredients of the luting mud of the *Nine Elixirs* in turn are the same as those given in the *Golden Liquor*, except for a single ingredient, which is omitted in the latter text. The heating process described in the *Flower of Langgan* is similar in many respects to those used for the first, third, fourth, and sixth of the *Nine Elixirs*. The commentary to the *Golden Liquor* states that the final transmutation of the elixir into gold should be accomplished following the directions given in the *Nine Elixirs*. Similar examples of shared methods could be multiplied, and are pointed out in the present chapter.

#### THE CRUCIBLE

In the Taiqing methods, the crucible is typically formed by two superposed vessels made of red clay (*chishi zhi*) and joined by their mouths. Owing to this feature, the texts often mention a “double crucible” (*liangfu*) or an “upper and lower earthenware crucible” (*shangxia tufu*). According to the



method given in the commentary to the *Scripture of Great Clarity*, red clay is pounded, sieved, steamed for one day, and added to vinegar, forming a mud used for making three pairs of double crucibles. Then thirty pounds of oak bark are boiled for one day; the dregs are removed, and by frying the remaining portion a reddish-black lacquer is obtained, called “oak lacquer” (*huqi*), which is used for luting the mouths of the two crucibles and their inner parts. The commentary states that this vessel can be used for compounding not only the Elixir of Great Clarity but also the Nine Elixirs, the Golden Liquor, the Reverted Elixir, and the Flower of Langgan—in other words, all the elixirs whose methods are found in the three main Taiqing sources and in the two early *waidan* texts included in the Shangqing corpus.<sup>1</sup>

No other early Taiqing text describes the preparation of the crucible in such detail as does the commentary to the *Scripture of Great Clarity*; in other instances, as we shall presently see, the main focus is on the luting process. The *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* merely states that one should use a crucible holding three and a half pecks made in Xingyang, Changsha, or Yuzhang (in present-day Henan, Hunan, and Jiangxi, respectively), four-tenths of an inch thick.<sup>2</sup>

#### MYSTERIOUS AND YELLOW

In several methods of the *Nine Elixirs*, the crucible is sealed first with a lead-mercury compound called Mysterious and Yellow (*xuanhuang*), then with a mud typically obtained from seven ingredients called Mud of the Six-and-One (*liuyi ni*). Besides preventing the crucible from breaking when it is heated, both muds, as we have seen in Chapter 4, play an important symbolic role. The Mysterious and Yellow represents the merging of the principles of Yin and Yang and their incorporation into the crucible and the elixir. The Mud of the Six-and-One represents the stages of the cosmogonic process, which the alchemical process symbolically brings back to its origin by causing the ingredients of the elixir to return to the state of *prima materia*.

In the Mysterious and Yellow, the Yin and Yang principles in their pure state are represented by the essences of lead and mercury, which are liberated by the adept when he heats the native substances. Then lead and mercury are repeatedly steamed in a bamboo cylinder, and finally are sublimated with aqueous solutions of realgar and cinnabar.<sup>3</sup> Details on the last stage of the process, called the “hundred steamings” (*baizheng*), are found in the “Secret Instructions” on the *Nine Elixirs*. The Mysterious and Yellow is first

placed in a bamboo cylinder and steamed, forming an aqueous solution. Then the cylinder is turned upside down, and the steaming is repeated. After this is done “one hundred times,” the compound is soaked in solutions of realgar and cinnabar, placed in a sealed crucible, and sublimated nine times.<sup>4</sup> The same function that the lead-mercury compound plays in the *Nine Elixirs* is performed in other Taiqing texts by refined lead alone, called Lead Elixir (*qiandan*) or Yellow Elixir (*huangdan*).<sup>5</sup>

According to the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*, the crucible used for making the Eighth Elixir can alternatively be luted with the Mysterious and White (*xuanbai*), a compound also known as White of Lead (*qianbai*, or lead acetate).<sup>6</sup> Two methods for making the Mysterious and White are found in the commentary. In the first one, lead and gold are liquefied, added to mercury, and soaked in an acetic bath called Flowery Pond (*huachi*) for seven days. Then the solution is placed in a sealed bamboo cylinder and soaked again in the Flowery Pond for thirty-six days. Only lead and gold are used in the second method, and they are left in vinegar for thirty-six days.<sup>7</sup> The White of Lead is also used in one of the methods found in the commentary to the *Scripture of Great Clarity*, where it is used for coating the crucible, together with a layer of Mud of the Six-and-One prepared “according to the method in the *Nine Elixirs*,” and a mixture of earth, vinegar, and salt.<sup>8</sup>

Besides being used for luting the crucible, the Mysterious and Yellow is sometimes placed inside the vessel with the other ingredients of the Nine Elixirs. Another demonstration of this use is seen in the method for making the Liquid Pearl in Nine Cycles (*jiuzhuan liuzhu*), which is described in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*. Native lead and cinnabar are first refined to obtain their essences. After the addition of the “two waters” (*ershui*, i.e., the aqueous solutions of realgar and cinnabar), they are steamed one hundred times.<sup>9</sup> To this stage, the procedure is the same as the one used for making the Mysterious and Yellow. In the “Secret Instructions” on the *Nine Elixirs*, the method continues by dividing the compound into nine parts, each of which is used in turn as the upper and lower layers in a crucible that contains mercury. The crucible is heated in nine stages until the whole lead-mercury compound is consumed.<sup>10</sup>

#### MUD OF THE SIX-AND-ONE, OR DIVINE MUD

The outer and inner surfaces and the two mouths of the crucible are also covered with the Mud of the Six-and-One (*liuyi ni*), which is also known as

Divine Mud (*shenni*). In the methods of the Nine Elixirs, this mud is made of alum (*fanshi*), Turkestan salt (*rongyan*), lake salt (*luxian*), arsenolite (*yushi*), oyster shells (*muli*), red clay (*chishi zhi*), and talc (*huashi*). The seven ingredients are pounded, heated for nine days and nights in an iron vessel, pounded again, sieved, and then soaked in a Flowery Pond (*huachi*). The crucible is luted first with this mud, then with the mud of Mysterious and Yellow, and finally is left to dry in the sun for ten days.<sup>11</sup>

The crucible used for making the Elixir of Great Clarity is coated with a layer of mud prepared “according to the method described in the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*.” Directions for the luting mud that are virtually identical to those of the *Nine Elixirs* are also given in the *Golden Liquor*, although here talc is omitted from the list of ingredients.<sup>12</sup> The most elaborate and lengthy description of the luting technique, however, is the one found in the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*, which devotes more than half of the entire text to it. After the adept performs the purification practices, he makes a mud with oyster shells, white clay (*baishi zhi*), powdered mica (*yunmu*), earthworm excreta (*yinlou fen*), talc, and white alum (*bai fanshi*). He pounds and sieves these six substances and places them in vinegar, forming a mud that is used for luting the outer and inner parts of two crucibles. After the vessel has dried, he lutes it again, repeating the process three times altogether. Then he adds lead and vinegar to the ingredients, forming another mud, which is also spread on the inner side of the vessel. Finally, he closes the two halves of the crucible, and lutes their mouths and their outer sides with three layers of the same mud and a layer of Mud of the Six-and-One.<sup>13</sup>

In the *Flower of Langgan*, the ingredients of the mud are different but are again seven: oyster shells, earthworm excreta, horse hair, talc, red clay, goat hair, and salt. They are sifted, added to vinegar, and pounded “thirty thousand times.” The adept then lutes the crucible both inside and outside, applying the mud gradually and letting it dry after each layer is added. Then some Yellow Elixir (*huangdan*) is added to vinegar, is again pounded “thirty thousand times,” and is spread on the inner part of the crucible. After the ingredients are placed in the crucible, the mud is applied first to the joints, then to the outer part of the crucible. As the *Flower of Langgan* remarks, this method is easier than the one used for making the crucibles of the Golden Liquor and the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles, but the pounding and the luting require more attention: “Be cautious so that the floreate essence (*hua-jing*) does not leak away. If it leaks away, there will be no benefit.”<sup>14</sup>

FLOWERY POND

According to the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*, the Flowery Pond that is used for soaking the ingredients before they are heated is obtained from boiled wheat, yeast, the unidentified “white-azure stone” (*qingbai shi*), powdered lead, powdered cinnabar, and steamed red glutinous millet, which are placed in a closed vessel together with vinegar. The acetic bath should be prepared at the center of the laboratory, in a position of good auspice, and away from women and domestic animals. It is ready in seventy days in summer and one hundred and forty days in winter.<sup>15</sup>

In another method, found in the commentary to the *Scripture of Great Clarity*, the Flowery Pond is prepared by first pouring one pound of honey into five bushels of pure vinegar (*chun zuowei*). Then one soaks five pecks of millet in rainwater. When the sprouts appear, they are collected and left to dry in the sun; then they are pounded, filtered, and placed in the vinegar together with rice cakes containing alum (*fanshi*). After the vessel is hermetically closed, the Flowery Pond is ready in three days. At the end, one adds ten pounds of saltpeter (*xiaoshi*).<sup>16</sup> As a quotation in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* shows, this method is the same as the one found in the original, and now lost, *Scripture of Great Clarity*.<sup>17</sup>

THE HEATING METHOD

As it is under the action of fire that the elixir coagulates inside the vessel, heating the crucible is a crucial aspect of the work performed by an alchemist. Several *waidan* texts dating from the Tang period onward give instructions on the “fire times” (*huohou*), a complex system that regulates the intensity of fire according to the cycles of cosmic time. This system is based on several sets of cosmological emblems, such as the twelve “primary hexagrams” (*bigua*) of the *Book of Changes*, the Earthly Branches (*dizhi*), and other duodecimal devices, which represent the rise and descent of the “particle” (*dian*) of the Original Pneuma (*yuanqi*) issued from the Dao through the time cycles of the cosmos. The association of the time cycles to the heating cycle is shown by using the same emblems to describe the twelve main stages of heating. The purpose is not only to mirror the accomplishment of an entire cosmic cycle in the relatively short time required to compound an elixir but also to embody the “particle” of Original Pneuma into the elixir.<sup>18</sup>

The Taiqing heating method is much simpler, and no cosmological emblems enter its description. Kim Daeyeol, however, has shown that an anal-

ogy exists between the four-stage cycles of heating described in some early *waidan* sources—including the *Scriptures of the Nine Elixirs*—and the cycle of the four seasons. The heating method of the Taiqing texts represents, therefore, a precursor of the Tang and later system of “fire times.”<sup>19</sup> As described in the *Nine Elixirs*, the process takes place in cycles—usually four or nine—of nine days each. The directions given for the First Elixir are typical of the whole text:

First keep the crucible five inches above a fire of horse manure or chaff, and warm it for nine days and nine nights. Then increase the fire so that it touches the crucible, for nine more days and nights. [Then put the crucible over the fire, for nine more days and nights.] Finally let the fire cover the lower crucible for nine more days and nights. After thirty-six days altogether, you can extinguish the fire and let the crucible cool for one day.<sup>20</sup> (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.4b)

Similar directions are found in the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*, where the heating process requires altogether one hundred days. Heating is initially phased in six stages of nine days each, then is discontinued for ten days, and finally is started again for thirty-six days. The following passage also shows how close the technical terminology and the style of this text are to those of the *Nine Elixirs*:

First light a fire of chaff under the stand so that it is at up to six inches from the base of the crucible, for nine days and nine nights. Then increase the fire so that it is at three inches from the base of the crucible, for nine days and nine nights. Then increase it again so that it covers the base of the crucible for three inches, for nine days and nine nights. Then increase it again so that it covers the belly of the crucible for three inches, for nine days and nine nights. Then increase it again so that it covers the belly of the crucible for two more inches—making five inches altogether—for nine days and nine nights. Then increase it again so that it is at one inch under the seal of the crucible, for nine days and nine nights. Extinguish the fire and let the crucible cool for ten days. Then increase the fire again so that it is at half an inch from the juncture, for thirty-six days from dawn to night. This makes altogether ninety days and ninety nights [of heating]. You will obtain the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles. (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 3a)

In the *Flower of Langgan*, the heating process also requires one hundred days, but it involves only six stages. As in the previous instances, the method consists in progressively bringing the fire closer to the crucible.<sup>21</sup>

When the heating process is concluded, the layer of mud around the mouths of the two crucibles is removed with a notched blade or with sandstone. Then the vessel is opened with an iron tool. The elixir is collected using a feather of a two-year-old white chicken, one born from a rooster and a hen also white, that is bred separately from other chickens. After the elixir is collected, it is placed in a tightly sealed golden cylinder and kept in a silk bag, never to be left alone.<sup>22</sup>

#### TRANSMUTATION INTO GOLD

The *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* describes the transmutation of the elixir into gold, or—in one case—into silver, as the final act of the alchemical process. The First and the Fourth Elixirs are transmuted into gold with mercury; the Second Elixir is transmuted into gold with an aqueous solution of magnetite; the Sixth Elixir is transmuted into gold with mercury or lead; and the Seventh Elixir is transmuted into gold or into silver with lead. This transmutation is referred to with the word *dian*, which denotes, as “projection” does in Western alchemy, the process by which a small quantity of elixir confers its properties to other substances that are added to it.<sup>23</sup> The stated purpose of this transmutation is to verify that the elixir has been correctly prepared, but the *Nine Elixirs* also hints at the use of alchemical gold for making vessels when it says that the gold obtained in this way should be malleable.<sup>24</sup> In the following instance, gold is used for making a cylinder in which the elixir itself should be stored:

Sublimate the Medicine again as in the previous method. To test it, add to it some Grease of Dragons (*longgao ze*), and make it into pills the size of small beans.<sup>25</sup> Place them over an intense fire and blow the fire with a bellows. Gold will form in the time it takes to have a meal.

Gold also will form by projecting twenty-four scruples of Flower of Cinnabar (*danhua*) onto one pound of powdered mercury. When gold has formed, make it into a cylinder and store the Medicine in it. Similarly, if you pour one scruple of Flower of Cinnabar onto one pound of mercury or lead, put it over a fierce flame, and blow to make the fire increasingly intense, the whole will form gold. Be careful not to use excessive amounts [of the ingredients], or the gold will be hard; but if there is not enough, the gold will be soft. Neither would be malleable. (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.5a–b)

The *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* also describes a method for obtaining gold and silver from the elixir:

Take ten pounds of lead and place it in an iron vessel. Heat it on an intense fire and bring it to a boil. Pour one scruple of Flower of the Nine Cycles (*jiuzhuan zhi hua*) onto the liquid lead and stir. In one instant it will form nine pounds of gold.

Take one pound of quicksilver and seven pounds of tin,<sup>26</sup> and place them in a pot (*guo*). Heat them, and bring them to a boil three times. Pour one scruple of Flower of the Nine Cycles onto the liquid tin, and stir. In one instant it will become silver. If the elixir can produce these transmutations, its compounding has been successful. If the test fails, repeat the heating according to the previous method for ninety days and ninety nights, and you will not fail in obtaining the elixir.<sup>27</sup> (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 3b–4a)

Transmutation into gold is also mentioned in the received text of the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*, which states that “if you add yellow clay to the Golden Water and the Mercury [Water], and calcine them (*duan*) over an intense fire for one day, they will entirely transmute themselves into gold.”<sup>28</sup>

### *Elixir of Great Clarity*

The main Taiqing elixir was the Elixir of Great Clarity (*taiqing dan*). The method is lost with the scripture that contained it; what we know about it comes from the summary given by Ge Hong in his *Inner Chapters*, and from fragmentary details found in the *Oral Instructions to the Scripture of Great Clarity*. Ge Hong states that “the Elixir of Great Clarity is slightly more difficult to compound than the Nine Tripods (i.e., the Nine Elixirs), but is a superior method for rising to heaven in broad daylight.”<sup>29</sup> He summarizes the method as follows:

When you compound it, you should first prepare the Flowery Pond (*huachi*), the Red Salt (*chiyao*), the Hard Snow (*genxue*),<sup>30</sup> the Mysterious and White (*xuanbai*), the Flying Talisman (*feifu*), and the Divine Water of the Three-and-Five (*sanwu shenshui*). Only then can the fire be lit. The elixir of the first cycle confers immortality after it is ingested for three years; that of the second, after two years; that of the third, after one year; that of the fourth, after half a year; that of the fifth, after one hundred days; that of the sixth, after forty days; that of the seventh, after thirty days; that of the eighth, after ten days; and that of the ninth, after three days.

Place the elixir of the ninth cycle in a Divine Tripod (*shending*) and expose it to the sun after the summer solstice. When the tripod becomes hot, add one pound of Vermilion Child (*zhu'er*, cinnabar) beneath the lid and then retire, watching and waiting that the essence of the sun shines upon it.

Suddenly the five colors of divine radiance (*shengguang*) will appear together, glowing and sparkling, and the elixir of the ninth cycle will transmute itself into a Reverted Elixir (*huandan*). Ingest a speck of it, and you will rise to heaven in broad daylight. The elixir in nine cycles should be compounded in a sealed earthenware crucible and heated by a chaff fire, first gentle and then intense. (*Baopu zi*, 4.77)

Ge Hong also describes a ceremony to be performed before ingesting this elixir, saying that the directions to perform it were found in a “separate scroll.”<sup>31</sup>

Details on some aspects of the procedure summarized by Ge Hong are found in the *Oral Instructions of the Celestial Master*. The commentary describes seven methods:

1. Preparation of the Flowery Pond
2. Aqueous solution of the Real Pearl (*zhenzhu*, i.e., refined mercury)
3. Aqueous solution of an amalgam of lead and tin, the product of which is defined as “quicksilver” (*shuiyin*)
4. Compounding of the Silver Snow (*yxue*)
5. Preparation of the crucible
6. Compounding of the Hard Snow (*genxue*)
7. Compounding of the Male Snow (*xiongxue*)<sup>32</sup>

The names of three of these methods—those for the Flowery Pond, the Red Salt, and the Hard Snow—correspond to those of the preliminary preparations mentioned by Ge Hong. As the original *Scripture* is not extant, however, there are no clues to identify what role these and the other methods listed above played in compounding the Elixir of Great Clarity. The *Oral Instructions*, moreover, does not reveal the identity of the Flying Talisman and the Divine Water of the Three-and-Five; nor does it refer either to the nine cycles of heating or to the final transmutation of the elixir with cinnabar.

Nevertheless, the *Oral Instructions* hints at an important role played by mercury in the method for compounding the Elixir of Great Clarity. Mercury is mentioned in several sections of the commentary. The Real Pearl is obtained by placing mercury and saltpeter inside the quill of a bird’s feather (*niaoge*), which is sealed with wood and lacquer and is soaked in a Flowery Pond for seven days or longer. If it is ingested for one hundred days, it confers immortality.<sup>33</sup> Mercury also appears as the name of the lead-tin compound (which is described as “quicksilver,” *shuiyin*, possibly implying a



change of properties from Yin to Yang) and as an ingredient of the three other methods given in the *Oral Instructions*: those for making the Silver Snow, the Hard Snow, and the Male Snow. To compound the Silver Snow, mercury is boiled in vinegar for nine days and nine nights; it is then added to the unidentified “flowery stone” (*huashi*) and is made into a powder.<sup>34</sup> This powder is placed in the crucible and is covered with Red Salt, a compound obtained by refining alum and salt that is also mentioned by Ge Hong in his summary.<sup>35</sup> The Hard Snow is obtained by placing mercury in a vessel with plaques of copper (*tongban*) and vinegar. The amalgam is made again into plaques and soaked in a Flowery Pond; if it is placed in a crucible with Red Salt, one obtains the Male Snow.<sup>36</sup>

### *Nine Elixirs*

In his *Inner Chapters*, Ge Hong points out the difficulties that one faces in making Nine Elixirs (*jiudan*):

The Nine Elixirs certainly are superior methods for making the medicines of immortality, but the ingredients used to compound them are extremely varied. If communication among the four directions [of the empire] was possible, one could purchase the ingredients, but [at present] they cannot be procured because the Nine Regions are isolated from each other. Moreover, one must keep the fire going for several dozen days and nights, and watch over its intensity so that it does not lose the proper strength. This is painstaking and extremely difficult. For these reasons, [the Nine Elixirs] are not as easy to prepare as the Golden Liquor. (*Baopu zi*, 4.84)

The final sentence of this passage alludes to the fact that making the Golden Liquor does not require any heating.

Ge Hong also gives details on the relation of the Nine Elixirs to some “minor elixirs” (*xiaodan*) whose methods were found in texts not belonging to the Taiqing tradition. In the Method of the Elixir of the Great One for Summoning the Celestial Souls and the Earthly Souls (*Taiyi zhao hunpo danfang*), “the Five Minerals (*wushi*) are hermetically closed with the Mud of the Six-and-One (*liuyi ni*), in a way similar to the method of the Nine Elixirs.”<sup>37</sup> The Instantly Achieved Elixirs (*licheng dan*) are also nine, “similar [in number] but inferior to the Nine Elixirs.”<sup>38</sup> The same is true for the Five Numerous Elixirs (*wuling dan*), which according to tradition were transmitted by the Eight Masters (Bagong) to Liu An.<sup>39</sup>

TABLE 4  
Ingredients of the Nine Elixirs.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
cinnabar	•					•			
quicksilver		•		•	•		•	•	
lead		•							
realgar			•	•	•	•			•
orpiment			•			•			•
malachite				•				•	•
alum				•		•			
sulphur				•					
lake salt				•					
hematite				•	•				
arsenolite				•		•			•
chalcantithite						•			
magnetite						•		•	•

There is then the *Scripture of the Five Numinous Elixirs* (*Wu lingdan jing*) in one scroll, containing five methods. One uses cinnabar (*dansha*), realgar (*xionghuang*), orpiment (*cibuang*), laminar malachite (*cengqing*), alum (*fanshi*), magnetite (*cishi*), Turkestan salt (*rongyan*), and hematite (*Taiyi Yu yuliang*). One also uses the Mud of the Six-and-One and a Divine Chamber (*shenshi*, a secret name of the crucible). The elixirs are compounded after one performs an offering ceremony (*jiao*). They will be ready in thirty-six days. The Talismans of the Five Emperors (*Wudi fu*), which are written with the five colors of these elixirs, make one free from death. However, [the Five Numinous Elixirs] are inferior to the Elixir of Great Clarity and the Elixirs of the Nine Tripods. (*Baopu zi*, 4.78)

According to the received text of the *Nine Elixirs*, the main steps of each method are the following. The ingredients (see Table 4) are placed in an earthenware crucible, which is closed with another overturned crucible.<sup>40</sup> The vessel is luted with the Mud of the Six-and-One and a mud of Mysterious and Yellow; after it has dried, it is placed on the fire. At the end of the required number of days it is left to cool and is then opened. The elixir is collected with a chicken feather and is added to other substances. In some instances, it is said to be ready; in other instances, it must be placed in the crucible and heated again. If the essence of the ingredients does not coagulate under the upper part of the crucible, the entire process should be repeated.

The following descriptions of each method are based on the directions given in the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, the “Secret Instructions,” and the *Scripture of the Liquid Pearl*.<sup>41</sup>

*First Elixir: Flower of Cinnabar (danhua).* The First Elixir is obtained

from cinnabar, called Real Powder (*zhensha*) in the *Nine Elixirs* and Vermilion Child (*zhu'er*) in the *Liquid Pearl*. The crucible is luted with the Mud of the Six-and-One and with a mud of Mysterious and Yellow. Heating requires four cycles of nine days. If the elixir has not formed, an aqueous solution of magnetite and some Grease of Dragons (*longgao ze*) should be added to it, and it should be heated again for thirty-six days. The "Secret Instructions" gives the method for the solution of magnetite, and explains that Grease of Dragons may be understood either as a secret name of "worm juice" (*chongzhi*) obtained by leaving seven worms under salt, or of dew collected on mulberries (*sang shang lu*). To ascertain whether the elixir has been correctly prepared, it is transmuted into gold. If gold does not form, the elixir is not ready; "this is because you have not luted the crucible hermetically, or because you have transgressed against the precepts."

*Second Elixir: Divine Tally (shenfu).* The section on the Second Elixir is divided into three parts that describe methods for making the Divine Tally and two other elixirs. All three methods are based on mercury, which according to the "Secret Instructions" initially should be refined nine times in order to expel its toxicity. In the first part of the method, the crucible is luted first with the Mud of the Six-and-One, then with a mud of oyster shells and red clay. Mercury is heated in nine cycles of one day each, and the crucible turned upside down at every cycle. The product of the sublimation is collected, added to carp's gall, and sublimated nine more times; then it is added to Grease of Dragons to obtain the Divine Tally. This elixir can be heated in nine further cycles with the Mysterious and Yellow to obtain the Yellow of the Elixir Flower (*danhua zhi huang*), or can be added to mercury to obtain a Reverted Elixir (*huandan*).<sup>42</sup>

The second part describes a method for making another lead-mercury compound, called Yellow Essence (*huangjing*), which can be added to an aqueous solution of magnetite and transmuted into gold. The third part describes a method based on mercury and the Mysterious and Yellow. After nine days of heating, the product of the sublimation is added to dog's or carp's gall, and then is kept on the fire for nine more days. With this method, one obtains the Reverted Elixir of the Divine Tally (*shenfu huandan*).

*Third Elixir: Divine Elixir (shendan).* The ingredients of the Third Elixir are orpiment and realgar, two minerals respectively associated with Yin and Yang. They are first soaked in a Flowery Pond containing oyster shells, red clay, and magnetite, and then are placed in a crucible and covered with pow-

dered Mysterious and Yellow. The crucible is luted with a mud of Mysterious and Yellow and with the Mud of the Six-and-One, and is heated in four cycles of nine days each. The product is collected, added to Grease of Dragons, and heated again for thirty-six days, according to the *Nine Elixirs*, or twenty-seven days, according to the *Liquid Pearl*.

*Fourth Elixir: Reverted Elixir (huandan).* The Fourth Elixir is obtained from eight ingredients: mercury, realgar, laminar malachite, alum, sulphur (*tingzhi*), lake salt, hematite, and arsenolite. The crucible is luted first with a mud made of alum, arsenolite, red hematite, Turkestan salt, oyster shells, red clay, worm excreta, mica, and talc. Then it is luted again with the Mud of the Six-and-One, and is heated in nine cycles of nine days each. According to the "Secret Instructions" the mud prepared with the nine ingredients mentioned above is placed inside the crucible; a layer of Mysterious and Yellow is placed over it, followed by the eight ingredients of the elixir.

*Fifth Elixir: Elixir in Pellets (erdan).* The ingredients of the Fifth Elixir are mercury, realgar, and hematite. The crucible is luted with the Mud of the Six-and-One and a mud of Mysterious and Yellow, and is heated in two cycles of nine days each.

*Sixth Elixir: Refined Elixir (liandan).* The Sixth Elixir is obtained from eight minerals, which according to the *Nine Elixirs* are cinnabar from Ba or Yue (present-day Sichuan and Zhejiang, respectively), realgar, orpiment, laminar malachite, alum, arsenolite, chalcantinite (*shidan*), and magnetite. (The *Liquid Pearl* lists cinnabar from Ba and Yue as two different ingredients, and does not mention arsenolite.) The ingredients are powdered and added to Grease of Dragons. A layer of Mysterious and Yellow is also placed at the bottom of the crucible. The crucible is luted first with a mud made of oyster shells and red clay, then with the Mud of the Six-and-One. (The *Nine Elixirs* gives two slightly different versions of the luting method; the second one corresponds to the method of the *Liquid Pearl*.) The crucible is heated for thirty-six days (or thirty days according to the *Liquid Pearl*). If this elixir is added to either mercury or lead, it forms gold.

*Seventh Elixir: Soft Elixir (roudan).* The single ingredient of the Seventh Elixir is mercury, which is heated in four cycles of nine days each according to the *Nine Elixirs*, or for twenty days according to the *Liquid Pearl*. The crucible is luted with a mud of Mysterious and Yellow and with the Mud of the Six-and-One. If lead is added to the Soft Elixir, it forms gold.

*Eighth Elixir: Fixed Elixir (fudan).* The Eighth Elixir is obtained from

mercury, laminar malachite, and magnetite, which are covered with a layer of Mysterious and Yellow. The crucible is luted with a layer of Mysterious and Yellow (which may be replaced with the Mysterious and White, *xuanbai*), a layer of powdered laminar malachite and magnetite, and a layer of Mud of the Six-and-One.<sup>43</sup> The crucible is heated in nine cycles of nine days each. Finally the elixir is added to Grease of Dragons and is heated for ten more days. The *Liquid Pearl* gives two versions of the method for making the Eighth Elixir, which differ in some details.

*Ninth Elixir: Cold Elixir (bandan).* The Ninth Elixir is made with realgar, orpiment, laminar malachite, arsenolite, and magnetite. The crucible is luted with a layer of Mysterious and Yellow, a layer of Mud of the Six-and-One, and a layer of worm excreta and “yellow soil” (*huangtu*). The ingredients are placed in the crucible with the Liquid Pearl (*liuzhu*, i.e., the Mysterious and Yellow) and are heated for nine days.

### *Golden Liquor*

Ge Hong reports that the properties of the Golden Liquor (*jinye*) are comparable to those of the Nine Elixirs, but says that the Golden Liquor is easier to prepare because its ingredients, except for gold, are more common and there is no fire to tend.<sup>44</sup> His summary of the method begins with a passage quoted from the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* not found in its received text; it concerns the divine origins of the scripture and the ritual context of its practice:

It was by ingesting the Golden Liquor that the Great One (Taiyi) became an immortal. The Golden Liquor is not inferior to the Nine Elixirs. . . . This scripture says that when one ingests the Golden Liquor, one’s whole body takes on a golden hue. Laozi obtained this scripture from the Primordial Princess (Yuanjun), who said: “This Way is extremely important. It appears only once every hundred years, and is stored in a stone chamber (*shishi*).” All those who compound this elixir should perform the purification practices and observe the interdictions for one hundred days, abstaining from contacts with ordinary people. [To do this,] build a pure chamber (*jingshe*) on a slope of a famous mountain, where a stream flows east. (*Baopu zi*, 4.82–83)

Ge Hong describes the method of the Golden Liquor and the benefits of its ingestion as follows:

To compound it, take one pound of gold by the old scales. Also use Grease of Dragons of the Mysterious Light (*xuanming longgao*), Stone within the

Head of the Great One's Decade [?] (*taiyi xunshou zhong shi*), Icy Stone (*bingshi*), Purple Roaming Woman (*ziyou nü*), Liquor of the Mysterious Water (*xuanshui ye*), Stone That Transmutes the Metals (*jinhua shi*), and cinnabar. Seal them together until they liquefy. . . .

The elixir will be ready in one hundred days. If you ingest one ounce of it, you will become an immortal. If you do not yet wish to leave the world, and want to become an Immortal of Earth (*dixian*) or an Immortal of Water (*shuixian*), merely perform the purification practices and observe the interdictions for one hundred days. If [instead] you intend to rise to heaven, ingest it after you abstain from cereals for one year. If you ingest half an ounce, you will live a long life free from death. The ten thousand injuries and the hundred poisons will not harm you. You will be able to support your family and hold an official position; all your wishes will become true, and nothing will be interdicted. Later, if you wish to rise to heaven, you can accomplish the purification practices and observe the interdictions, ingest an ounce, and fly away as an immortal. (*Baopu zi*, 4.82–83)

This is followed by a short summary of the stages of compounding, which omits important details.

The full method is described in the *Scripture of the Golden Liquid of the Divine Immortals* (*Shenxian jinzhuo jing*), which can be divided into five parts respectively concerned with the following subjects:

1. Compounding of the Golden Liquor
2. Compounding of a Reverted Elixir (*huandan*)
3. Uses of the Reverted Elixir
4. Properties of the Golden Liquor
5. Compounding of the Elixir for the Nomination to Immortal (*bixian dan*)<sup>45</sup>

Ge Hong's summary mainly corresponds to the second, third, and fifth parts of the received text.

*Golden Liquor.* According to the received text, to prepare the Golden Liquor one first makes an amalgam of powdered gold and mercury. The amalgam is placed in a bamboo cylinder with solutions of saltpeter and realgar. Saltpeter, it is stated in the text, dissolves realgar, which in turn neutralizes the toxicity of gold.<sup>46</sup> The cylinder is sealed with silk and lacquer and is placed in vinegar. In one hundred days, gold and mercury liquefy and form a Gold Water (*jinshui*, i.e., the Golden Liquor itself) and a Mercury Water (*hongshui*).

As given in the received text, the ingredients of the Golden Liquor would seem not to match those mentioned by Ge Hong, whose list, found in the

passage quoted above, is longer and is complicated by the use of secret names. However, comparison with the synonyms given in the *Synonymic Dictionary of the Materia Medica* (*Shiyao erya*), an alchemical lexicon dated 806 CE, and in the commentary to the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, suggests the following equivalences:<sup>47</sup>

Grease of Dragons of the Mysterious Light	= mercury
Stone within the Head of the Great One's Decade [?]	= realgar
Icy Stone	= calcareous spar
Purple Roaming Woman	= Turkestan salt
Liquor of the Mysterious Water	= magnetite in aqueous solution
Stone That Transmutes the Metals	= saltpeter

The two main ingredients of the received text, gold and mercury, are the first ones listed by Ge Hong, who also mentions the solutions of realgar and saltpeter. Wang Kuiké suggests that the other ingredients were used to prepare the Flowery Pond (i.e., the acetic bath) that the received text simply calls “vinegar” (*zuowei*).<sup>48</sup>

The method for compounding the Golden Liquor is not reported in the *Inner Chapters*, but Ge Hong says that “there is no fire to tend; the mixture is simply placed in a Flowery Pond for a number of days sufficient to prepare the elixir.”<sup>49</sup> This matches the directions given in the received text.

*Reverted Elixir.* In the received *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*, the method continues with the preparation of a Reverted Elixir (*huandan*). More mercury is boiled in the Golden Liquor, while pouring vinegar onto it. After thirty days of intense heating, the mercury takes on a purple color and is placed in a yellow earthenware bowl, internally luted with the Mud of the Six-and-One. The commentary explains that this bowl is a crucible, or *fu*, the vessel commonly used for making the other Taiqing elixirs. As pointed out in the commentary, moreover, the recipe for the mud also is identical to the one found in the *Nine Elixirs*, except for the last ingredient, talc, which is not mentioned in the received *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*. The Reverted Elixir is ready in the time “from dawn to sunset,” which corresponds to six so-called double hours (*shi*). A small quantity of it forms gold and silver, and its ingestion confers immortality. For the transmutation into gold and silver, the commentary again refers to the methods given in the *Nine Elixirs*.

In the *Inner Chapters*, the elixir obtained at this stage of the process is

called Amber Pill (*weixi jusheng*).<sup>50</sup> The only detail that differs between the two versions is the time of the second heating; according to Ge Hong this requires “sixty double hours,” which may be an error for “six double hours”:

According to the method for making Amber Pills from the Golden Liquor, boil the Golden Liquor with quicksilver for thirty days. Fill an earthenware bowl [with the quicksilver] and lute it with the Mud of the Six-and-One. Place it over a raging fire and heat it. In sixty double hours its whole content will transmute itself into an elixir. Ingest this elixir in pills the size of small beans, and you will become an immortal. Take a speck of it with a spatula, add one pound of quicksilver, and it will form silver. (*Baopu zi*, 4.83)

*Uses of the Reverted Elixir.* The third part of the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* concerns the uses of the Reverted Elixir. Placed on fire, it will form the Elixir-Gold (or Cinnabar Gold, *danjin*). This can be used for smearing the blades of swords that “keep the other weapons ten thousand miles away” (a phrase that also appears in the *Nine Elixirs*) or for casting dishes and cups. Those who eat and drink from these vessels can live as long as Heaven and Earth, for these vessels, like the *fangzhu* mirrors, absorb the essences of the sun and the moon.<sup>51</sup>

In his summary, Ge Hong mentions the transmutation into Elixir-Gold and the casting of dishes and cups:

Further, take one pound of this elixir and place it over a fire. Fan it, and it will transmute itself into a flowing scarlet gold, called Elixir-Gold. If you smear daggers and swords with this Gold, they will keep the other weapons ten thousand miles away. If you cast plates and bowls with the Elixir-Gold and take food and drinks from them, you will live a long life. Just as you can collect a liquid from the *fangzhu* mirrors, so from these plates and bowls you can collect [the essences of] the sun and the moon, and obtain their liquor. If you drink it, you will be free from death. (*Baopu zi*, 4.83)

*Properties of the Golden Liquor.* The fourth part describes the properties of the Golden Liquor. One should ingest the Gold Water and the Mercury Water facing the sun, as the *Nine Elixirs* also often recommends one to do. Upon their ingestion, one’s body takes on a golden hue, and one is transmuted into light and rises to heaven, becoming an assistant to the god of the Central Yellow (Zhonghuang) and to the Great One (Taiyi). These two deities, according to the commentary, exert control over all the immortals. Those who ingest only half an ounce of Gold Water, instead, can enjoy a long life. This portion of the received *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* has no



correspondence in the *Inner Chapters*, but one of Ge Hong's passages quoted above mentions the ingestion of half a dose of the elixir in order to defer the time of rising to heaven.

*Elixir for the Nomination to Immortal.* The fifth and final part of the received *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* concerns another elixir. By adding yellow clay to the Gold and Mercury Waters one obtains gold after one day of heating, and the Elixir for the Nomination to Immortal after two days. When one ingests this elixir, one will be able to retire to a mountain or a river and become an immortal. This is referred to in identical terms by Ge Hong:

If you add yellow clay to the Golden Liquor, place them in a bowl luted with the Mud of the Six-and-One, and heat the bowl over an intense fire, its whole contents will form gold. This is the first half of the procedure. If you heat this gold longer, it will transmute itself into an elixir. By ingesting this elixir in pills of the size of small beans, you will be able to enter a famous mountain or a great river and become an Immortal of Earth (*dixian*). If you powder a speck of this elixir into quicksilver, it will immediately become silver; if you add one ounce of this silver to one pound of lead, it will all become silver. (*Baopu zi*, 4.83)

Comparison of the *Scripture of the Golden Liquid of the Divine Immortals* with Ge Hong's summary shows beyond doubt that this text contains the original Taiqing method for making the Golden Liquor.

### *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*

Although the method of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles (*jiuzhuan huandan*) has been preserved in the Shangqing (Highest Clarity) textual corpus, the techniques and the rites required to compound it correspond in virtually all details to those described in the three main Taiqing sources. As I suggested earlier in this book, this is one of two recipes that were incorporated into the Shangqing corpus from earlier texts, either belonging to the Taiqing tradition or closely associated with it.<sup>52</sup>

The recipe is found, with other materials that are not directly related to it, in the *Essential Instructions on the Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*). The section concerned with the Elixir in Nine Cycles can be divided into seven parts, respectively concerned with the following subjects:

1. Preparation of the crucible
2. Preparation of the stove
3. Ingredients and closing of the crucible
4. Heating and ingestion of the elixir
5. Other uses of the elixir
6. Supplementary details on the crucible and the heating
7. Ritual rules<sup>53</sup>

After the adept has received the text and the oral instructions, he performs the purification practices (*zhai*) for one hundred days. When the preliminaries are accomplished, he retires to a secluded spot on a mountain. There he builds the Chamber of the Divine Stove (*shenzao wu*) near an east-flowing stream. At the center of the chamber he arranges the stove, placing an iron stand inside it to hold the crucible. Then he prepares the Mud of the Six-and-One and a mud made of Lead Elixir (*qiandan*, i.e., refined lead) and vinegar. As in the *Nine Elixirs*, both muds are used for luting the crucible.<sup>54</sup>

The compounding of the elixir begins at the dawn of the ninth day of the ninth month. Its ingredients are alum, nodular malachite (*kongqing*), quartz (*baishi ying*), cinnabar, realgar, orpiment, and mercury. At the end of the heating cycle, the crucible is left to cool for seven days. When it is opened, the elixir that has coagulated under the upper part of the crucible is collected using a feather of a three-year-old chicken. If the elixir has not formed after the first hundred days of heating, it is because the fire was not strong enough; the crucible should be closed again and heated for thirty-six more days. The elixir is ingested at dawn, facing east. A small quantity of it transmutes lead and mercury into gold and silver.<sup>55</sup>

### *Flower of Langgan*

The second elixir described in a Shangqing source, but closely related to the Taiqing tradition in both its technical and ritual features, is the Elixir Flower of Langgan (*langgan huadan*). Its method is preserved in the *Divine, Authentic, and Superior Scripture of the Elixir Flower of Langgan* (*Langgan huadan shangjing*). As remarked above, three sections describing processes that do not take place in an alchemical laboratory, but as part of meditation practices, were added to this text after its inclusion into the Shangqing corpus.<sup>56</sup>

To prepare the Flower of Langgan, the adept first performs the purifi-

cation practices for forty days, then prepares a mud (called Divine Mud, *shenni*) pounding oyster shells, worm excreta, talc, red clay, sheep and horse hair, and salt, and adding them to vinegar. The crucible is luted with several layers of this mud and is left to dry. Then the inner part of the crucible is coated with a mud of Yellow Elixir (*huangdan*, another term that denotes refined lead). On an auspicious day the purification practices are started again. At the end of the preliminaries, the deities of the mountains and the earth are invoked and asked to guard the compounding of the elixir.<sup>57</sup>

The fire is started after thirty more days of purifications. The fourteen ingredients of the Flower of Langan—cinnabar, realgar, quartz, nodular malachite, amethyst, graphite, saltpeter, sulphur, actinolite, mica, pyrite, white lead, Turkestan salt, and orpiment—are pounded and placed in the crucible, and mercury added on top of them. The crucible is closed with another overturned crucible, their mouths sealed with a mud of oyster shells, and their outer parts with the mud of Yellow Elixir. Then the fire may be started in the Chamber of the Stove (*zaowu*). The elixir is ready in one hundred days. If it is ingested at dawn on the day of the new moon in the eleventh, the fourth, or the eighth month, vapors of seven colors will emanate over one's head, and one's complexion will take on an aspect similar to gold and jade. Holding one's breath will make chariots appear from the eight corners of the cosmos (*baxuan*), and spitting on the ground will make a flying dragon materialize. If one whistles to the right, divine immortals will come to pay homage, and if one points to the left, the Three Pure Ones (Sansu) will blow together.

The methods described above represent the central act of the alchemical process. Several facets of the methods, as we have seen, are shared by different texts, which often refer to each other for details on the procedures that should be followed. Together with the methods, the technical terminology and the literary style used in the different texts are a further indication of their affiliation to a single legacy.

**Part Three**  
**A History of the Great Clarity**



GODS, DEMONS, AND ELIXIRS:  
 ALCHEMY IN FOURTH-CENTURY  
 JIANGNAN

Having surveyed the main doctrinal, ritual, and technical features of the Taiqing tradition, we will now look more closely at its relation to the contemporary religious legacies of Jiangnan. For the reasons mentioned in the Introduction, this relationship changed in remarkable ways after the creation of the Shangqing and Lingbao corpora in the second half of the fourth century. I will therefore use different approaches to examine this topic in the two following chapters. In the present chapter, I look at the relationship of *waidan* to the fourth-century legacies of Jiangnan through the eyes of Ge Hong, who has left a valuable account of those legacies in his *Inner Chapters*. In the next chapter, I examine some events and phenomena that help us to better appreciate the position of alchemy among the early medieval Daoist traditions in the same area.

*Ge Hong and His Inner Chapters*

Reflecting with more or less awareness the judgment of the Chinese literati, who found in the *Inner Chapters of the Book of the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature* (*Baopu zi neipian*) an accessible introduction to the arts of the elixirs, several scholars in the past have called this work the main Chi-

nese alchemical text and its author, Ge Hong (283–343), the greatest Chinese alchemist. Until some decades ago, many of those who shared this view did not have access to the texts of the *waidan* corpus in the Daoist Canon, and may even have been unaware of their existence. This point has a considerable importance, for Ge Hong's work fully reveals its peculiarities only when it is compared to the sources in that corpus. Rather than being an anonymous scripture revealed by a deity, centered on methods for compounding the alchemical medicines, and rich in language addressed to initiates (either for its technical terminology or for its imagery), the *Inner Chapters* is an eclectic work, written with few exceptions in an accessible language, and in which a preponderant role is played by the views of its author, who often speaks in the first person and expounds his own thoughts and beliefs.

Even more significant is the fact that, while hagiographic accounts depict him as compounding elixirs late in life on Mount Luofu (Luofu shan, Guangdong), Ge Hong himself acknowledges that at the time he wrote his *Inner Chapters* he had not performed any alchemical method.<sup>1</sup> Ge Hong's lack of personal expertise in compounding the elixirs does affect his image as an alchemist—which anyway is to a considerable extent a creation of later hagiographers and modern scholars—and may be at the origin of some unclear or inaccurate reports of alchemical processes found in his work.<sup>2</sup> The documentation provided in the *Inner Chapters*, moreover, reflects the author's attempt to incorporate fragments of different bodies of doctrine and practice into a comprehensive view. Of none of them, it should be remarked, was Ge Hong a master or a teacher.

Yet, despite its many shortcomings, there are several reasons to appreciate the evidence provided by the *Inner Chapters* on the early development of alchemy and on its background. Ge Hong states that he originally collected materials found in several sources to compile a handbook for his own reference, and that later he expanded those excerpts and notes into a book addressed to “those who are moved by the same aspirations as myself.”<sup>3</sup> As a compilation that makes large use of external sources, the *Inner Chapters* contains a remarkable number of materials that are otherwise lost, many of which concern alchemy; in other cases, as we have seen with the Taiqing sources, his quotations make it possible to identify and authenticate the received versions of early texts in the Daoist Canon. Ge Hong's remarks and allusions to other traditions, moreover, provide insights into the relation of

the arts of the elixirs to contemporary religious practices. This testimony, finally, comes from a member of one of the families committed to the preservation of the traditional lore of southeastern China and the enhancement of its prestige among the Jiangnan aristocracy: actually Ge Hong's family was—according to his own statement, which no source appears to contradict—initially the only one to possess the Taiqing texts.<sup>4</sup>

The *Inner Chapters*, therefore, provides a view of alchemy as seen by a member of the audience to which the Taiqing texts addressed themselves. Needless to say, not all Taiqing adepts must have looked at alchemy as Ge Hong did; many of them, however, are likely to have shared his views on how alchemy related to other traditions, which is the point that interests us here. As we shall see, Ge Hong often draws distinctions among the different trends of doctrine and practice that he tries to accommodate into an all-inclusive view, and his views in this concern are found to be fundamentally consistent with statements found in the Taiqing sources.

### *The Golden Elixir and the “Minor Arts”*

As we shall presently see in more detail, Ge Hong deemed meditation and the compounding and ingestion of elixirs to be superior to self-cultivation methods like *daoyin* (gymnastics), breathing, sexual techniques, and various types of diets including, in particular, the abstention from cereals (*duangu* or *bigu*). To him the use of herbal drugs also was subordinate to meditation and alchemy: whereas medicines of herbs and plants (*caomu zhi yao*) only afford longevity, Ge Hong states, guarding the One (*shouyi*) enables one to approach the gods and repel demons, and ingesting the Taiqing elixirs confers immortality. The distinction between the benefits of alchemy and meditation, however, was not so clear-cut, for, as we shall see, Ge Hong also says that “if one ingests the Great Medicine of the Golden Elixir (*jindan dayao*), the hundred evils do not come close.” For Ge Hong, therefore, alchemy grants one access to the sacred in both of its aspects: the absolute Dao, on the one hand, and the intermediate world of gods and demons, on the other.

Through this appraisal, Ge Hong presents alchemy as a teaching that, by the beginning of the fourth century, had positioned itself, together with meditation, at the higher end of the spectrum of religious and ritual traditions of Jiangnan. At the lower end, Ge Hong places a broad group of followers of other practices whom he singles out for criticism. The definition he uses to



refer to them, “coarse and rustic practitioners” (*zawei daoshi*), implies a distinction between their practices and the pure and refined teachings that Ge Hong upheld:

It is clear that if the present-day coarse and rustic practitioners do not obtain the great methods of the Golden Elixir, they will not obtain a long life. They may be able to heal illnesses and bring a dead person to life again, to abstain from cereals and be free from hunger for many years, to summon gods and demons, to be sitting at one moment and then rise up and disappear, to see one thousand miles away, to reveal the rise and fall of what is obscure and hidden, and to know the fortunes and calamities awaiting what has not yet sprouted. All this, however, will be of no advantage to increase the length of their life. (*Baopu zi*, 14.259)

This group of practitioners is associated by Ge Hong with the “minor arts” (*xiaoshu*), which, as shown by the passage quoted above, include healing practices, longevity techniques, divination, and magic. At best, says Ge Hong, some of these arts may serve as preliminary to the compounding of elixirs. If they are practiced along with the ingestion of the “minor medicines” (*xiaoyao*), they allow one to live longer. After that, “one can gradually climb to the Subtle” (*jianjie jingwei*).<sup>5</sup>

What might appear to be a contradiction in Ge Hong’s views is the fact that although he considers alchemy to be superior to the “minor arts,” as defined above, he includes among the benefits afforded by the ingestion of the elixirs virtually all those granted by the practices he deems to be inferior. One should not suspect, however, that this is due to Ge Hong’s misunderstanding or reflects his own way of seeing. The *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* and the other Taiqing texts repeatedly mention the elixirs’ gifts of summoning gods and controlling demons together with their property of granting immortality. The elixirs also afford powers usually associated with practices no less different from alchemy than magic:

If you smear coins with the Reverted Elixir (*huandan*) and use them to buy something, all those coins will return (*huan*) to you on that very day. (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.10b)

Similarly, according to the *Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*, one can smear objects with the Divine Pills (*shenwan*) so that they would “come back to you upon leaving your hands.”<sup>6</sup> Even one of the terms used by Ge Hong to refer to the methods of the “coarse and rustic practitioners,”

namely “to be sitting at one moment and then rise up and disappear” (*zuo-zai liwang*), is mentioned in the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* among the benefits accorded by the ingestion of one of its compounds.<sup>7</sup>

### *Approaching the Gods, Averting Evil*

Let us now observe more closely the picture of the religious traditions of Jiangnan that emerges from the *Inner Chapters*, and compare it to statements found in the Taiqing sources. For Ge Hong, three doctrinal and textual bodies incorporated the higher layer of those traditions: (1) the *Script of the Three Sovereigns* (*Sanhuang wen*), the *Charts of the Real Forms of the Five Peaks* (*Wuyue zhenxing tu*), and the associated writings; (2) the Taiqing alchemical scriptures; and (3) the writings dealing with meditation. The methods found in these three corpora were, in Ge Hong’s view, superior to all other practices prevalent in his time, to which nevertheless he devotes much space in his *Inner Chapters*.

Ge Hong’s statements, as well as evidence available elsewhere, show that the *Script of the Three Sovereigns* and the *Charts of the Real Forms of the Five Peaks* embodied essential features of the religious lore of Jiangnan before the Shangqing and Lingbao revelations. The two scriptures are not extant in their original form, and their state in Ge Hong’s time—especially in the case of the *Real Forms*—is not exactly known to us.<sup>8</sup> For our present purposes, however, we should focus our attention on what Ge Hong reports about their content and uses:

I heard my master Zheng [Yin] say that among the important writings on the Dao none surpasses the *Inner Script of the Three Sovereigns* (*Sanhuang neiwen*) and the *Charts of the Real Forms of the Five Peaks*. The immortal officers (*xianguan*) and the accomplished men (*zhiren*) of antiquity venerated the methods expounded in these writings, considered them to be secret, and transmitted them only to those destined to become immortals. They handed them down only once in forty years, after one made an oath by smearing one’s mouth with blood and established a bond by offering gifts [to one’s master]. . . .

The *Three Sovereigns* says that if a household possesses this scripture, one can keep off evil and the noxious demons, quell the unhealthy pneumas (*qi*), intercept calamities, and neutralize misfortunes. If someone is on the point of death because of an illness, let him hold this text and, provided he has full faith in its methods, he will not die. If a woman is having a difficult

delivery and is in danger of exhausting her vital force, let her hold this text and her child will be born immediately. If a practitioner who wishes to search for long life enters a mountain holding this text, he will keep off tigers, wolves, and mountain sprites. The five poisons (*wudu*) and the hundred calamities (*baixie*) will dare not come near him, and when he crosses a river or a large expanse of water, he will avoid crocodiles and halt wind and waves. If one obtains this book, one can carry out transformations and start any activity without inquiring about proper places or propitious times. One's household will not know calamity or adversity. (*Baopu zi*, 19.336)

The *Three Sovereigns* could also be used for summoning the deities of heaven, the Director of Destinies (Siming), and the god of the Great Year (Taisui) asterism.<sup>9</sup> These and other deities would appear in human form, “and one will be able to question them on good and bad fortune, on safe and dangerous things, and on the detrimental or harmless course of illnesses.”<sup>10</sup> The same powers are attributed to the *Real Forms*, which enables one to summon the gods of the mountains and to protect oneself from outer perils.<sup>11</sup> These powers derive from the mighty talismans on which the *Three Sovereigns* and the *Real Forms* were based. The two scriptures were, in fact, talismans themselves: as we have seen, owning them, and even merely holding them in one's hands, offered protection against assaults of demons, dangers brought by outer forces, and even death.

#### SUMMONING GODS AND EXPELLING SPIRITS WITH THE ELIXIRS

The relation of beliefs and practices like those described above to alchemy and meditation—the other two doctrinal and textual corpora that Ge Hong endorsed—might at first seem unclear, for we are accustomed to think of Chinese alchemy as rooted in the system of correlative cosmology, and to Daoist meditation as exclusively concerned with the visualization of gods or with inner contemplation. Instead, one of the reasons why alchemy and meditation were valued in Ge Hong's time is that the benefits they afforded included those associated with the *Three Sovereigns* and the *Real Forms*: protection by benevolent gods and expulsion of dangerous spirits.

Ge Hong's statements on meditation will be examined later in the present chapter. As for alchemy, the Taiqing sources emphasize the adept's ability to summon immortals and other divine beings, from the most exalted gods like the Great One (Taiyi) to minor deities like the Ministers of the Mountains (*shanqing*) and the Officers of the Moorlands (*zewei*), and from the Gods of

Soil and Grain (Sheji) to the Count of the Wind (Fengbo) and the Master of Rain (Yushi):

In two hundred days you will rise to heaven and enter the earth, and the immortals will become your attendants. In one year the Great One will welcome you in a chariot of clouds pulled by dragons and horses. (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.10b)

The ten thousand gods will become your attendants and offer protection, and the Jade Women will be at your service. The divine immortals will welcome you, and you will rise to heaven. The hundred demons (*baigui*), the Gods of Soil and Grain, the Count of the Wind, and the Master of Rain will welcome you, and you will have them at your service. (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.11a)

After you ingest [the Divine Elixir] for one hundred days, the divine immortals will give you their welcome. Jade Men, Jade Women, Jade Lads, the Ministers of the Mountains, and the Officers of the Moorlands will become your attendants, appearing in human form. (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.9b)

At the same time, as do the talismans of the *Three Sovereigns* and the *Real Forms*, the Taiqing elixirs grant the power of expelling dangerous demons and keeping away harmful entities. To do so, one does not necessarily need to ingest the elixirs, and may merely keep them in one's hand or carry them at one's belt—a revealing detail since scriptures and talismans could also be used in the same way:

If you want to keep away the five sorts of weapons (*wubing*), you should carry [the Divine Elixir] at your belt. Divine beings will offer their protection and keep the weapons away. (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.9b)

If you walk keeping in your hand one pill [of the Fixed Elixir] of the size of a date stone, the hundred demons will be exterminated. . . . This elixir will also keep off thieves and robbers, and even tigers and wolves will run away. If a woman who lives alone keeps one pill the size of a large bean in her hand, the hundred demons, thieves, and robbers will flee and dare not come near her. (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.13b)

The apotropaic properties of some elixirs also become active by rubbing them on a person's eyes, on the house doors, and even on the city walls:

If you smear the eyes of a person or the walls of a city with the Reverted Elixir, the hundred demons will flee. (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.10b)

Marking the doors with the Fixed Elixir, the hundred calamities (*baixie*), the myriad sprites (*zhongjing*), and the *chimei* and *wangliang* demons will dare not come before you.<sup>12</sup> (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.13b)

These examples show that, as do the talismans of the *Three Sovereigns* and the *Real Forms*, the elixirs cause gods and other divine beings to appear and offer their protection to the adept. At the same time, however, the elixirs offer one benefit that goes beyond the reach of those scriptures, as they make it possible not only to summon the gods, but also to rise to heaven with them.

### *Herbal Medicines, Elixirs, and Healing*

One point often made by Ge Hong in his *Inner Chapters* is that alchemy, meditation, the use of talismans and charms (*jin*), and the observance of precepts (*jie*) should be distinguished from the ingestion of herbal drugs. These drugs, says Ge Hong, are inadequate to circumvent the harms caused by demons and spirits:

Those who do not obtain the Golden Elixir, and only ingest medicines of herbs and plants and practice the minor arts, can extend the number of one's years and defer the time of death, but cannot obtain immortality. Some only know how to ingest herbal medicines, but ignore the essential arts for inverting the course of aging: they entirely lack the principle of long life. Others do not understand how to wear the divine talismans at their belt, how to make charms and observe the precepts, how to meditate on the deities within themselves, and how to guard the Real One (*zhenyi*): they can merely prevent internal ailments from arising and wind and humidity from hurting them. If a noxious demon, a powerful evil, a mountain sprite, or a poison in the water suddenly harms them, they are dead. Some do not obtain the methods for entering the mountains (*rushan*), and let the mountain deities bring calamities to them. Goblins and demons (*yaogui*) will put them to test, wild animals will wound them, poisons from pools will hit them, and snakes will bite them. There will be not one, but many prospects of death. (*Baopu zi*, 13.243)

Here Ge Hong draws two sets of distinctions. The first is between the alchemical elixirs and the herbal drugs: the elixirs confer immortality, the herbal drugs only prolong life. Of equal importance, for Ge Hong, is another distinction, namely the one between practices that deal with the sacred at various levels—alchemy, meditation, use of talismans and charms, and observance of precepts—and those that merely help one to heal from “internal ailments” (*neiji*), but leave one subject to outer evil influences. The importance of the “calamities that come from outside” (*wailai zhi buo*), which include anything from wild animals to baneful demons, is often emphasized in

the *Inner Chapters*. In one of the passages dealing with this topic, Ge Hong quotes teachings he had received from his master, saying:

If one ingests the Great Medicine of the Golden Elixir, the hundred evils do not come close even if one continues to dwell in the world. If one ingests only herbs and plants and small pills of the eight minerals, one can only heal from illnesses and increase one's length of life. This is because such preparations are not enough to avert the calamities that come from outside. (*Baopu zi*, 18.327)

As a result, concludes Ge Hong, one would be molested by the deities of the mountains and fall victim to the assaults of sprites and demons (*jingmei*).

Ge Hong's insistence on the limited benefits of the "medicines of herbs and plants" does not result from an attempt to prove the inferiority of medicine compared to alchemy. His point is not the distinction between alchemy and medicine as a learned system of theory and practice for the prevention and the healing of ailments; his criticism, in particular, is not addressed to the cosmological and medical system at the basis of the *Inner Scripture of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi neijing*) and the related writings. Ge Hong is considering a different question: how to deal with the dangerous aspects of the supernatural world. Herbal medicines, for him, are not the answer, for they have no power against demons and the "calamities that come from outside."

It is therefore not surprising that Ge Hong does not report methods for making herbal medicines in his work. Substantial traces of methods close to those referred to by Ge Hong are preserved, however, in other works. An extensive collection is found in the *Prolegomena to the Five Talismans of the Numinous Treasure* (*Lingbao wufu xu*), a text made of the received versions of writings related to different traditions of third- and fourth-century Jiangnan.<sup>13</sup> Besides materials on the Five Talismans, ritual, and meditation, the *Prolegomena* includes a chapter almost entirely devoted to several dozen recipes for herbal drugs. Enabling one to abstain from other foods and to overcome hunger is often cited as the main benefit yielded by these drugs; in addition, they make it possible to be healed from ailments, recover energy, regain youth, and obtain long life. Despite occasional mentions of becoming a "divine immortal" (*shenxian*) and summoning supernatural beings, these are not among the main benefits provided by these medicines as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

## ELIXIRS AND HEALING

Just as they incorporate the apotropaic properties of the talismans, the alchemical medicines also integrate the healing properties of the herbal drugs. Several elixirs are said to restore energy and cure diseases, including convulsions (*dian*) and leprosy (*lai*).<sup>15</sup> The Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles is said to have therapeutic virtues and, like the *Script of the Three Sovereigns*, even restores life after death:

Take the residue of the elixir from the crucible, mix it, and pound it fifty thousand times. Add some sugar or honey to it, and make it into pills the size of kola nuts. These are the Divine Pills of the Great Ultimate for Reverting to Life (*Taiji huanming shenwan*). If you place two of these pills in the mouth of those who have died no more than three days earlier, and make them ingest those pills with freshly drawn water, they will come back to life. If the Divine Pills are given to those who suffer loss or injury, or who have become blind or deaf, they will revert to their previous condition. If you have an internal ailment, ingest a couple of pills; if the ailment is an outer one, pulverize two pills and apply the powder by rubbing. You will heal in a short time. One can easily heal any illness in this way. (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 4a)

The same healing and restorative powers are possessed by the Elixirs of the Nine Radiances (*jiuguang dan*), whose methods were found, according to Ge Hong, in the second scroll of the original and now-lost *Scripture of Great Clarity*:

To prepare them, heat together and transmute the Five Minerals (*wushi*): cinnabar (*dansha*), realgar (*xionghuang*), alum (*fanshi*), laminar malachite (*cengqing*), and magnetite (*cishi*). Each mineral is submitted to five transmutations, and each transmutation produces five colors. There are five minerals and therefore twenty-five colors.

Take one ounce of each color and place it in a separate vessel. To revive a dead person, provided that no more than three days have passed since his or her death, take a speck of the green elixir, mix it with water, and wash the deceased with it, also placing a speck in his or her mouth; that person will immediately return to life. If you want to summon the Traveling Cuisine (*xingchu*), take a speck of the black elixir, mix it with water, and spread it on your left hand.<sup>16</sup> Just name what you wish and it will appear of itself; thus you will be able to summon anything in the world. If you want to make yourself invisible, or to know beforehand what has yet to happen, or to stop the course of aging without becoming old, ingest a speck of the yel-

low elixir and you will obtain a long life without death. You will see one thousand miles away while sitting, and will know good and bad luck as if everything is before your eyes; you will know the fate of other people with their well-being or failures, their longevity or early death, their riches and honors or their poverty and privation. The method for compounding [the Elixirs of the Nine Radiances] is found in the second of the three scrolls of the *Scripture of Great Clarity*. (*Baopu zi*, 4.78)

Again, one cannot fail to notice that the Elixirs of the Nine Radiances, in addition to their healing powers, afford several benefits associated by Ge Hong with the “minor arts”: invisibility, divinatory powers, and feats of magic.

#### RATIONALE FOR THE ELIXIRS’ SUPERIORITY

Besides the partial similarities in the benefits that they grant, affinities between the herbal drugs and the alchemical elixirs also occur in their methods of preparation and in the fact that—with exceptions, as we have seen—both need to be ingested to produce the desired effects. One aspect of the alchemical methods, however, has no parallel in the methods for making herbal drugs: the alchemical process, as we have seen earlier in this book, brings matter back to its original state of “essence.” This point underlies the rationale that Ge Hong offers for the superiority of the elixirs over herbs:

Even the lowest of the minor elixirs is by far superior to the highest among herbs and plants. If any herb or plant is placed on a fire it burns away. Instead, if cinnabar is placed on a fire it produces quicksilver, and after repeated transmutations it reverts to cinnabar. It is by far superior to any herb or plant and therefore it can make one live long. Only the divine immortals see this principle. (*Baopu zi*, 4.72)

Additionally, Ge Hong maintains that whereas herbs merely afford an “external support” (*wai fu*), the beneficial effect of the elixirs permeates the entire body of those who ingest them:

The property of gold and cinnabar is that the more they are heated, the more wondrous are their transmutations. If gold is placed on a fire it does not lose weight even after it is refined one hundred times, and if it is placed under the earth it does not decay until Heaven abides. Ingesting these two substances refines the body of a human being, so that it does not grow old and die. One can say that this borrowing from an outer substance to strengthen oneself is similar to the fuel that nourishes a torch without letting it extin-



guish, or is like the smearing of verdigris (*tongqing*) under one's feet so that they do not decay in water. In the latter instance, one borrows the strength of copper to protect one's flesh. But when gold and cinnabar enter one's body, they permeate the system of transformation of food into nutritional essences: they are not simply an external support like verdigris. (*Baopu zi*, 4.71-72)

For these reasons, according to Ge Hong, one could live several hundred years by ingesting herbs and plants, "but if one neglects the Divine Elixirs, one will never be able to become an immortal."<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, confirming a pattern that has now become familiar, the *Nine Elixirs* suggests that one compound the Divine Tally Elixir and "smear it on the soles of your feet. When you walk on the water, you will not sink."<sup>18</sup>

### "Nourishing Life" and Longevity Techniques

The introductory section of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* sets apart alchemy, whose elixirs grant one ascension to heaven, from breathing, *daoyin*, and the ingestion of herbal drugs, whose benefits do not go beyond extending the length of one's life:

All those who want to live a long life, but do not obtain the Divine Elixirs and the Golden Liquor, merely bring suffering upon themselves. Practicing breathing and *daoyin*, exhaling the old and inhaling the new breath, and ingesting medicines of herbs and plants can extend the length of one's life, but do not allow one to escape death. When a man ingests the Divine Elixirs, he becomes a divine immortal and transcends the generations [of mortals]. (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.1a)

Ge Hong was aware of the distinction drawn in the *Nine Elixirs*, as he quotes this passage in his *Inner Chapters*.<sup>19</sup> Consistently with this statement, he distinguishes breathing, *daoyin*, the ingestion of herbal drugs, as well as the sexual practices, from the compounding of the elixirs, and places them into a separate category. The latter he designates as *yangsheng*, or Nourishing Life, a comprehensive rubric that has no specific definition but covers several techniques that share a physiological foundation. The wide differences among these techniques, and the existence of a large number of methods for each of them, prompt Ge Hong to recommend discrimination in their practice:

In everything pertaining to Nourishing Life, one should listen much but incorporate the essential, look wide but choose the best. One cannot rely on

one's bias to a single practice. Moreover, the danger is that those who devote themselves to one of these practices trust only their discipline of choice. Those who know the arts of the Mysterious Woman and the Pure Woman say that one can transcend the world only through the arts of the bedchamber. Those who are expert in breathing (*tuna*) say that one can extend the number of years only through circulation of breath (*xingqi*). Those who know the methods for bending and stretching [their body] say that one can avoid aging only through *daoyin*. Those who know the methods based on herbs and plants say that one can surpass any limit only through medicines and pills. When the study of the Dao does not bear fruit, it is because of biases like these. (*Baopu zi*, 6.124)

Ge Hong's view of these disciplines is condensed in a significant question: "Can the Dao really be nothing more than the pursuit of nourishing life?"<sup>20</sup> Despite some inconsistencies in his evaluation of these techniques, in the following passage he qualifies them as inferior or ancillary to alchemy, and specifically as merely granting freedom from illnesses:

Those who fully understand the principles of Nourishing Life ingest the Divine Medicines. Besides this, they circulate breath without negligence, and practice *daoyin* from morning to evening so that their system of transmutation of food into nutritional essences operates without obstructions. In addition, they practice the arts of the bedchamber, moderate their food and drinks, do not expose themselves to wind and humidity, and do not grieve about what they cannot do. Thus they can be without illnesses. (*Baopu zi*, 15.271)

The object of Ge Hong's criticism, therefore, is not whether these techniques have value in themselves, but the belief that one can practice them as the sole way to attain immortality. A clear example of this attitude is his evaluation of the "arts of the bedchamber" (*fangzhong shu*). First, Ge Hong reminds his readers that the effects of these techniques do not go beyond those of the "minor arts" that he rejects:

Among the arts of Yin and Yang (i.e., the sexual practices), the best ones can heal the lesser illnesses, and the next ones can prevent one from becoming depleted. Since their principles have inherent bounds (*qi li zi you ji*), how could they confer divine immortality, ward off calamities, and lead one to happiness?

Then Ge Hong points out that the Yellow Emperor, who is associated with both alchemy and the sexual techniques, became an immortal through the practice of the former rather than the latter:

The common people hear that the Yellow Emperor rose to heaven with 1,200 women, and say that he obtained longevity only thanks to this. They do not know that the Yellow Emperor compounded the Nine Elixirs on Lake Ding at the foot of Mount Jing, and then rose to heaven by riding a dragon. He might have had 1,200 women, but it was not for this reason that he was able to do it.<sup>21</sup> (*Baopu zi*, 6.129)

Like the ingestion of herbal drugs, therefore, the techniques of Nourishing Life afford benefits, but they are not the same as those that only alchemy and meditation could grant.

### *Alchemy and Meditation*

For Ge Hong, the superior practices that allow one not only to communicate with the gods and expel the noxious spirits but also to obtain immortality are alchemy and meditation. Referring to both as the culmination of an adept's search for transcendence, he states that "as for the immortals' methods of longevity there is only the Golden Elixir, and as for guarding one's form (*shouxing*) and warding off evil there is only [the method of guarding] the Real One (*zhenyi*)."<sup>22</sup> The shared numinous origins of alchemy and meditation were asserted by an anonymous "scripture of the immortals" (*xianjing*) quoted by Ge Hong, which stated that the original celestial texts pertaining to both were concealed together on Mount Kunlun, the mountain at the center of the world:

The scriptures on the Elixir in Nine Cycles and on the Golden Liquor, and the instructions on guarding the One, are all in the Five Citadels (*wucheng*) of Mount Kunlun. They are stored in jade caskets, inscribed on golden tablets, sealed with purple mud, and impressed with the badge of the Center (*zhongzhang*). (*Baopu zi*, 18.324)

Another text known to Ge Hong, however, assigned meditation a standing higher than that of the apotropaic methods of the *Sanhuang wen* and the alchemical elixirs. According to this anonymous text, which is quoted in both the *Inner Chapters* and the *Prolegomena to the Five Talismans of the Numinous Treasure*, the Yellow Emperor received the latter two bodies of teaching, together with others, during his initiatory journey to the four directions of the world. It was only at the end of his pilgrimage, in the Jade Hall (Yutang, the residence of Laozi), that the August Man of Celestial Reality (Tianzhen huangren) granted him the method for guarding the One.<sup>23</sup>

Guarding the One (*shouyi*) was reckoned to be the most important among several methods of meditation that existed in Ge Hong's time:<sup>24</sup>

I heard my master say that in the scriptures on the Arts of the Way (*daoshu*) there are several thousand methods to meditate, to visualize, and to expel evil in order to protect oneself. For instance, countless methods are available to eliminate one's shadow and hide one's form, to guard one's form and appear lifeless, and for the nine mutations (*jiubian*), the twelve transformations (*shi'er hua*), the twenty-four generations (*ershisi sheng*), and so forth, along with those for seeing the gods within oneself and for making them visible. All these methods are effective. Sometimes, however, generating in meditation (*sizuo*) several thousand beings in order to protect oneself is so complicated that it may confuse one's mind. If one knows the Way of guarding the One, one can do without all other methods. Therefore it is said: "If you know the One, the ten thousand affairs are brought to completion."<sup>25</sup> (*Baopu zi*, 18.324)

Ge Hong distinguishes between two types of meditation on the One, which he calls "guarding the Real One" (*shou zhenyi*) and "guarding the Mysterious One" (*shou xuanyi*). Guarding the Real One, or "guarding the One" for short, consists of visualizing and meditating on the inner deities, seen as multiple forms taken by the One within the human being. These gods dwell in the main loci of the inner body, especially the three Cinnabar Fields (*dantian*). Another well-known passage of the *Inner Chapters* gives details on the practice:

The One has surnames and names, as well as clothes and colors. In men it is nine-tenths of an inch tall, in women six-tenths of an inch. Sometimes it is in the lower Cinnabar Field, at two inches and four-tenths below the navel. Sometimes it is in the middle Cinnabar Field, the Golden Portal of the Crimson Palace (*jianggong jinqu*) below the heart. Sometimes it is in the space between the eyebrows: at one inch behind them is the Hall of Light (*mingtang*), at two inches is the Cavern Chamber (*dongfang*), and at three inches is the upper Cinnabar Field. This is deemed to be extremely important within the lineages of the Way (*daojia*). From generation to generation, they orally transmit the surnames and names [of the inner gods] after smearing their mouths with blood. (*Baopu zi*, 18.323)

Some of the other methods mentioned by Ge Hong—especially those to "eliminate one's shadow and hide one's form" and those to "guard one's form and appear lifeless"—are related to the second type of meditation practices, collectively known as "guarding the Mysterious One." According

to Ge Hong, these practices are as effective as those for guarding the Real One, but are easier to perform. He describes them as follows:

To guard the Mysterious One, meditate on yourself as dividing into three persons. After you see these three persons, continue to increase them until they become several dozen, all similar to yourself, hiding or showing themselves. About this there are oral instructions; it is the so-called “way of dividing one’s form” (*fenxing zhi dao*). . . . My master said that in order to guard the [Mysterious] One, one should jointly cultivate the practice of the Bright Mirror (*mingjing*). When the “way of the mirror” (*jingdao*) is achieved, one can divide one’s form into several dozen persons, all with the same clothes and the same appearance. (*Baopu zi*, 18.325–26)

Ge Hong’s description suggests that while guarding the Real One consists of seeing the features that the One takes within the human being, guarding the Mysterious One makes it possible to multiply one’s form into “several dozen” or even “one thousand” replicas of oneself (ubiquity), or hide it altogether (invisibility).<sup>26</sup>

Beyond their differences, however, the two methods afford identical benefits, and these benefits are equal to those gained through the ingestion of the elixirs. On one hand, guarding the Real One enables one to access the divine world: “If you guard the One and preserve the Real (*cunzhen*), you will be able to communicate with the gods (*tongshen*).”<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, guarding the One confers protection against demons and other baleful entities:

On land, the One keeps off the evil animals; in water, it sends away the crocodiles. You will not fear the *wangliang* demons or the poisonous insects. The demons will dare not come near you, and the blades will dare not strike. . . . In the shrine of a demon, in a mountain’s forest, in a land infested by a plague, within a tomb, in a marsh inhabited by tigers and wolves, or in the dwelling of snakes, if you guard the One without distraction all evils will be expelled. But if you forget to guard the One even for a single instant, the demons will harm you. (*Baopu zi*, 18.324, 325)

Similarly, by guarding the Mysterious One, “you will be able to see all the numina of heaven and the spirits of earth (*tianling diqi*), and to summon all the deities of the mountains and the rivers.”<sup>28</sup>

Through its close relation to exorcistic and healing methods performed to communicate with divinities, ward off dangerous spirits, and heal illnesses, the alchemy of the Taiqing tradition found a fertile ground for growth among

the traditions of Jiangnan. At the same time, defining itself as a higher form of doctrine and practice, alchemy offered its adepts not only the benefits afforded by other practices, but beyond them, and most important, the knowledge of the Dao and immortality. The frequency with which Ge Hong presents his thoughts on these matters shows that this was a point that called for attention and clarification.

Seen in a broader perspective, this feature was required for the Taiqing tradition to claim the highest rank among the religious and ritual legacies of Jiangnan: to succeed in doing so, alchemy simultaneously needed to replace the practices related to those traditions, incorporate the benefits that they afforded, and offer additional ones. As we have seen in the Introduction to this book, any alchemical tradition does this with no effort, as incorporating elements from other traditions while providing them with a different doctrinal basis is one of the essential features of alchemy.

Ge Hong's views, therefore, illustrate the coexistence of the two aspects of Taiqing alchemy observed earlier, namely as a way of transcendence that enables one to obtain knowledge of the Dao and as a ritual practice performed to address deities and other supernatural beings. For this reason, at the beginning of the fourth century alchemy was still defined, with meditation, as the highest form of doctrine and practice in Jiangnan. By the end of the century, however, new Daoist revelations had taken place in the same region, which caused the downgrading of the Taiqing tradition, and the heaven Great Clarity, to a lower position. The next chapter examines some aspects of this renewed context.

THE WAY OF THE GREAT  
CLARITY AND DAOISM  
IN THE SIX DYNASTIES

In the previous chapter we looked at how Taiqing alchemy was related to the traditions of Jiangnan in Ge Hong's time. The religious history of that region underwent deep changes after the spread of the Way of the Celestial Masters (Tianshi dao) provided one of the prerequisites for the creation of the Shangqing (Highest Clarity) and Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) corpora of revealed writings in the second half of the fourth century. In this renewed context, the alchemy of the Taiqing tradition lost its prominent status among the traditions of Jiangnan. These developments also brought about changes within the alchemical legacy itself, causing the rise of new forms of doctrines and practices that resulted, ultimately, in the demise of *waidan*.<sup>1</sup>

Before we examine, in the present chapter, some aspects of the context in which alchemy developed after the Daoist revelations occurred, the relation of Shangqing and Lingbao Daoism to *waidan* requires some remarks. There is little or no space for *waidan* in the Shangqing and Lingbao doctrines and practices. *Waidan*, in fact, seems to have played no role at all in Lingbao, whose main historical function has been to provide the doctrinal context for the first major codification of Daoist ritual. Although some scholars have tried (unsuccessfully until now) to distinguish a particular social group or even a "syncretic community" behind Lingbao, the main task of this legacy

has been to elaborate new forms of ritual based on the native traditions of Jiangnan, integrating them with those imported by the Way of the Celestial Masters (and those that Buddhism was also spreading at that time in the same area). Both at the time of the creation of the Lingbao corpus and in later times, the performance of those rituals was the task of priests attached to the Way of the Celestial Masters. Lingbao, therefore, acted as one of the channels for the integration of the Way of the Celestial Masters into the traditions of Jiangnan. Being mainly concerned with ritual, it is understandable that the compounding of elixirs is not within the focus of this legacy; but given the larger context in which it developed, it is significant that one of the earliest explicit mentions of the “inner elixir” is found exactly in a Lingbao text.<sup>2</sup>

Shangqing, instead, despite focusing primarily on meditation, incorporated (as we have already seen, and as we shall see in more detail in this chapter) *waidan* texts into its own literature, and some immortals and semi-divine beings related to alchemy into its own pantheon. But although this marked the first—and apparently the only—encounter of a major Daoist tradition with *waidan*, the studied hierarchical arrangement of practices and saints reflected in the Shangqing texts was intended precisely to show that the Shangqing teachings and methods were superior to the earlier ones, including those of the Taiqing tradition, and thus were ready to replace them.

Based on this, it could be but a small step to conclude that *waidan* has no more than a marginal relation to Daoism as it evolved during the Six Dynasties and in later times. This step, in fact, has been made in some studies on Chinese alchemy. The existence of about one hundred *waidan* texts in the Daoist Canon (one of the largest corpora in that collection, if considered as a whole), in addition to the inclusion of the Great Clarity, of “the various transmutations and the talismanic charts” descended from that heaven, and of deities, saints, and immortals associated with alchemy into the system of the Three Caverns, shows, instead, how closely *waidan* was integrated into the construction that Daoists erected—with awareness and intention, as shown by the very complexity of that system—during the Six Dynasties.

The image of the heaven of Great Clarity in the *Supreme Secret Essentials* (*Wushang biyao*), surveyed in Chapter 2 of this book, is one of the testimonies to this integration. The present chapter focuses on three other phenomena that occurred as part of the same context: the encounter between the Taiqing and Shangqing traditions; the attribution of alchemical knowledge to Zhang Daoling (the beginner of the Way of the Celestial Masters); and the



formation of a supplement to the Daoist Canon named after the Great Clarity. Even though these events spanned more than one hundred years—from the late fourth to the end of the fifth century—they are, as we shall see, all closely related to each other.

### *Great Clarity and Highest Clarity*

No more than fifty years after Ge Hong wrote his *Inner Chapters*, new developments occurred in Jiangnan that deeply affected the later history of alchemy. The first and most important of them was the creation of the Shangqing, or Highest Clarity, corpus of writings, based on revelations that took place from 364 to 370. The rearrangement of the Jiangnan traditions that resulted from the compilation of this corpus was a first step toward the broader codification of the various legacies existent in Jiangnan in the system of the Three Caverns (*sandong*), whose earliest intimations are found in Shangqing texts.<sup>3</sup>

The *Declarations of the Perfected* (*Zhen'gao*), a comprehensive work that Tao Hongjing (456–536) wrote not only to systematize the Shangqing legacy but also to clarify its relation to the earlier legacies, ranks practices in the following hierarchy:

1. Shangqing meditation methods
2. alchemy (*waidan*)
3. sexual techniques, circulation of breath, and *daoyin* (i.e., the practices of Nourishing Life)
4. ingestion of herbal drugs

Clearly this is the same ranking promoted by Ge Hong two centuries earlier in his *Inner Chapters*, with the only important difference that whereas Ge Hong deemed *waidan* and meditation to be the two superior forms of practice, here meditation—in the forms endorsed by the Shangqing scriptures—is assigned the highest rank. One of the relevant passages in Tao Hongjing's work explicitly states that the meditation practices described in the main Shangqing text, the *Authentic Scripture of the Great Cavern* (*Dadong zhenjing*), are superior to any other method, including the compounding of the elixirs:

If one feeds on herbal drugs without knowing [the arts of] the bedchamber, circulation of breath, and *daoyin*, then the ingestion of drugs is of no bene-

fit, and one never attains to the Dao. If one fully concentrates on arousing the spirits (*ganling*) and causes them to appear by meditating on them, there is no need of the benefits afforded by the herbal drugs. If one only knows how to practice [the arts of] the bedchamber, *daoyin*, or the circulation of breath, and does not know the methods of the Divine Elixirs, one does not become an immortal. If one obtains the Golden Liquor and the Divine Elixirs, one becomes an immortal with no need of other practices. If one obtains the *Authentic Scripture of the Great Cavern*, there is no need of the Way of the Golden Elixir (*jindan zhi dao*).<sup>4</sup> (*Zhen'gao*, 5.11b)

However, as the Taiqing tradition did earlier, and for analogous reasons, Shangqing acquired some portions of the bodies of doctrines and practices it deemed to be inferior. This accounts for the complex relation of Shangqing to *waidan*. The passage quoted above from the *Declarations of the Perfected* shows that Shangqing does not entirely reject *waidan*; it considers it to be superior to exorcistic and healing practices and to the methods of Nourishing Life, and it acknowledges that the elixirs grant immortality. Tao Hongjing's *Declarations*, in fact, describes *waidan* methods and, as we shall presently see, Tao himself performed *waidan* practices. Within Shangqing, however, the compounding of elixirs is deemed to be subordinate to various types of meditation practices such as the visualization of divinities that reside in the heavens or within the human being.<sup>5</sup>

Against this background, the partial integration of *waidan* occurred in the only possible way that Shangqing could conceive. Instead of focusing on making and ingesting elixirs, Shangqing primarily uses some features of the alchemical process as a support for meditation practices. As we shall see in Chapter 12, some Shangqing texts use alchemical terminology and imagery to describe the celestial or inner pneumas that the adept "ingests"—an act that is in itself alchemical—in order to "refine" (*lian*) himself, provide nourishment to his inner deities and to the loci in which they reside, and even generate an immortal inner "embryo" or an "infant" that represents the adept's own authentic self. In these and other ways, Shangqing effectively bends the nature and purposes of *waidan* to its own ends, turning it into a metaphor used to describe inner processes, and anticipating in this way traits that later characterize inner alchemy, of which this tradition is one of the main forerunners.<sup>6</sup>

How incorporation and modification occurred from a purely textual point of view is shown by the two *waidan* scriptures that were accepted into the

Shangqing corpus. In one instance, with the *Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*, a *waidan* recipe became part of the revealed biography of Mao Ying and was presented as taught by Lord Wang (Wangjun), both of whom were among the highest saints of the Shangqing school. In the other instance, with the *Scripture of the Elixir Flower of Langgan*, another *waidan* recipe was expanded with the addition of sections that integrate a purely *waidan* method with processes that cannot happen in a laboratory, but only in meditation.

Besides these two texts, Shangqing accepted some other *waidan* methods into its literature throughout its history. Although none of these methods appears to be directly related to the Taiqing tradition, they testify to the role that alchemy played within Shangqing, and invite us to look more closely at some facets of its encounter with *waidan*.<sup>7</sup>

#### RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION

The *Authentic Scripture of the Great Cavern*, the central Shangqing scripture, was alternatively called *Inner Scripture of the Contemplation of the Heaven of the Superior Way of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing shangdao guantian nejing*). One can recognize in this title an allusion to the complete, unrevealed version of the *Scripture of Great Clarity*, whose title, as reported by Ge Hong, was *Scripture of the Contemplation of the Heaven of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing guantian jing*).<sup>8</sup> The main Shangqing scripture, therefore, was presented as the superior, unabridged version of the main Taiqing scripture, parts of which were still “not transmitted for teaching” in Ge Hong’s time but had become available by way of the Shangqing revelations.<sup>9</sup> Besides this, other evidence attests to Shangqing awareness of this text. The *Scripture of Great Clarity* is cited in the *Numinous Writ in Purple Characters* (*Lingshu ziwen*), a major Shangqing revealed text of which the *Elixir of Langgan* originally constituted one section.<sup>10</sup> References to it are also made in the *Declarations of the Perfected* through mentions of the Elixir of the Nine Efflorescences (*jiuhua dan*), a synonym of the Elixir of Great Clarity that refers to the nine intermediate elixirs prepared during its compounding.<sup>11</sup>

As for the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, its acceptance by Shangqing Daoism is attested to by Tao Hongjing, whose *Declarations of the Perfected* refers to the early compounding of the Nine Elixirs by “men of the recent antiquity” on Mount Mao (Maoshan, Jiangsu), the original seat of the Shangqing school.<sup>12</sup> Tao himself is known to have studied the scripture when, in

the early sixth century, he experimented unsuccessfully with *waidan*. His biography reports that he finally chose to devote himself to a different *waidan* practice only because he did not deem the text of the *Nine Elixirs* that he possessed to be sufficiently clear.<sup>13</sup> Tao therefore compounded the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles, whose method, as we have seen, had been revealed to Mao Ying. Fragments of Tao's *Concealed Instructions for the Ascent to Perfection* (*Dengzhen yinjue*) contain details about this practice—concerning, in particular, the ceremony of transmission, the construction of the laboratory, the places of origin of the crucibles, the ingredients of the luting mud and of the elixir, and the auspicious days for kindling the fire—that match its received version in the Daoist Canon.<sup>14</sup>

#### NEW LINES OF TRANSMISSION

The partial integration of *waidan* into the Shangqing tradition was supported by the creation of new hagiographic lines of transmission. In this regard, Shangqing followed two main routes, either by attributing the origin of the Taiqing methods to divine beings and immortals different from those mentioned in the Taiqing texts, or by representing the Taiqing immortals as disciples of Shangqing immortals. Tao Hongjing's biographer chooses the former option, stating that the method of the Golden Liquor was first transmitted not by Zuo Ci, but by Ma Mingsheng, Yin Changsheng, and Anqisheng, all of whom were supposed to have lived before Zuo Ci.<sup>15</sup> The *Declarations of the Perfected* exemplifies the second option: it admits Zuo Ci into the Shangqing roster of immortals and semi-divine beings but claims that he had received teachings and texts from Li Zhongfu, a disciple of the major Shangqing saint, Lord Wang (the saint who also taught the *Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*).<sup>16</sup>

The biographies of Shangqing immortals—which, as Isabelle Robinet has shown, acted as the main channel for admitting earlier traditions into the Shangqing corpus of doctrines and methods<sup>17</sup>—mention other lines of transmission. The biographies describe the practices through which their subjects had achieved their spiritual status, and elixirs and alchemical texts often figure among the treasures that they found, or received, during their initiatory quest. Mao Ying's biography, as we have seen, contained the method of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles. An extant fragment of it, moreover, hints at a method for transmuting the elixir into gold that corresponds to the procedure described in the *Nine Elixirs*.<sup>18</sup> Another Shangqing biography placed

all three main Taiqing scriptures under the patronage of Zhou Yishan, better known as Ziyang zhenren (Perfected of Purple Yang), another major Shangqing saint. His biography records his pilgrimage to various sacred places, stating that he first obtained the *Central Scripture of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing zhongjing*) from Zhang Zifang. Then, continuing his journey, he “climbed Mount Heming (Heming shan) and met Yang An, who transmitted to him the *Scripture of the Elixir of the Golden Liquor* (*Jinye danjing*) and the *Illustrations on the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods* (*Jiuding shendan tu*).”<sup>19</sup>

Further connections between the *Nine Elixirs* and Ziyang zhenren emerge from narratives concerning Xuanzi, the Mysterious Master who received this scripture from the Yellow Emperor. Xuanzi, who does not seem to be mentioned in other *waidan* texts, appears only once in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*, where he expounds a list of taboos to be observed while compounding the elixirs.<sup>20</sup> However, one of the texts that quote Ge Hong’s synopsis of the *Nine Elixirs* changes Xuanzi’s name into Juanzi, and Ge Hong’s *Inner Chapters* adds the significant detail that Juanzi was an adviser to the Yellow Emperor during his initiatory pilgrimage.<sup>21</sup> The *Biographies of the Immortals* (*Liexian zhuan*) appears to confirm the identity of Xuanzi and Juanzi when it states that Juanzi received from Boyang (one of the names of Laozi) the “nine methods of immortality” (*jiu xianfa*), which might be the *Nine Elixirs* themselves:

Juanzi came from the state of Qi (in present-day Shandong). He devoted himself to eating atractylis (*zhu*), of which he collected and ingested the essence. When he reached the age of three hundred years, he appeared in the state of Qi. He wrote the *Scripture of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity* (*Tiandiren jing*) in forty-eight scrolls. Later, while he was fishing in the He marshes (Heze, Shandong), he caught a carp whose stomach contained a talisman, and retired to Mount Dang (Dangshan, Jiangsu). He was able to summon wind and rain. He received the nine methods of immortality from Boyang. When the Prince of Huainan (i.e., Liu An) was young, he [also] received that text, but was unable to understand its teachings. [Juanzi’s] work, the *Spirit of the Lute* (*Qinxin*) in three sections, has a pleasing pattern (*tiaoli*).<sup>22</sup>

The sequence of associations that led to merging the figures of Juanzi and Xuanzi is not easy to establish, but the passage quoted above from the *Biographies of the Immortals* contains another detail of interest. Shangqing sources make Juanzi the master of Su Lin, who in turn is the master of Ziyang zhenren.<sup>23</sup> If the identification of the “nine methods of immortality” as

the Nine Elixirs is correct, this would construct a line of transmission of those methods that goes from Laozi to Juanzi, then to Su Lin, and finally to Ziyang zhenren, entirely neglecting the role played by Zuo Ci.

### *The Nine Elixirs and Zhang Daoling*

The new hierarchical arrangement of the Jiangnan traditions reflected in the Shangqing texts provided a model that later was developed and codified into the system of the Three Caverns (*sandong*). In this arrangement, Shangqing is assigned the highest rank, followed by Lingbao and by a third tier that incorporates various traditions, including as it did texts with historical backgrounds as different from each other as the *Scripture of Great Peace* (*Taiping jing*) and the *Sanhuang wen* (Script of the Three Sovereigns), together with “assorted methods, *daoyin*, and the Nourishment of Life,” and, of course, the alchemy of the Great Clarity.<sup>24</sup> The system of the Three Caverns provides the background against which we shall look at another aspect of the history of the Taiqing tradition during the Six Dynasties.

One of the best examples of the prestige enjoyed by the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* outside the alchemical tradition is the early attempt made to connect it with Zhang Daoling, the beginner of the Way of the Celestial Masters. The first source that documents this association—which, let it be mentioned once, is entirely fictional from a historical point of view—is the *Biographies of the Divine Immortals* (*Shenxian zhuan*). Although the date and authorship of the received versions of this source are still debated, its account of Zhang Daoling clearly reflects his image in the middle of the Six Dynasties. Instead of featuring Zhang’s mastery of healing and exorcism, as do other sources, the *Biographies* emphasizes his knowledge of the Nine Elixirs:

Zhang Daoling came from the state of Pei (in present-day Jiangsu). First he was a student of the National Academy (Taixue) and studied the Five Classics deeply, but when he was late in life he sighed and said: “This will be of no avail to extend the length of my life.” Thereafter he devoted himself to longevity practices, and received the methods of the Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi jiuding dan*). He intended to compound them, but the ingredients were extremely costly. Since his family was poor, he gave a thought to ploughing fields and raising cattle, but as he was not practical in those matters, he did not have a chance to compound them.

Later, the *Biographies* continues, Zhang moved to Sichuan and received the revelation of the teaching of Correct Unity (Zhengyi) from Laozi. After that, he finally had the means to purchase the ingredients needed to compound the Nine Elixirs.

When he achieved them, he ingested only half a dose as he did not yet want to rise to heaven. . . . He told all [his disciples]: “Many of you are not yet free from the vulgar customs and are unable to turn your back to the world. You may receive from me the methods of the circulation of breath (*xingqi*), gymnastics (*daoyin*), and the bedchamber (*fangzhong*), and you may ingest herbs and plants, but this would only allow you to live a few hundred years. The great import of the Nine Tripods is only within the reach of Wang Chang. Eventually, another man who comes from the east shall be able to obtain them.”<sup>25</sup> (*Shenxian zhuan*, in *Taiping guangji*, 8.55–58)

The “other man who comes from the east” is Zhao Sheng, one of Zhang Daoling’s two main disciples with Wang Chang. We have already met both disciples in Chapter 3 of this book as the putative authors, with their master, of the preface to the variant version of the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*.

Two explanations, at first, would seem to be conceivable to account for the attempt to place the *Nine Elixirs* under Zhang Daoling’s spiritual authority. On the one hand, the Jiangnan alchemical practitioners might have wished to legitimize themselves vis-à-vis the Celestial Masters by ascribing to Zhang the transmission of one of the main *waidan* texts. Vice versa, the account in the *Biographies of the Divine Immortals* might have been fabricated by the Celestial Masters themselves to help spread their cult in Jiangnan, especially among the elite to which alchemy addressed itself. Looking at the broader context of Daoism in the Six Dynasties, however, a third possibility also seems to be worthy of consideration.

THE WAY OF THE CELESTIAL MASTERS  
AND THE HEAVEN OF GREAT CLARITY

Besides texts like the *Biographies of the Divine Immortals*, other sources associate Zhang Daoling with a tradition that is definitely alchemical. The status of these sources is more doctrinal than hagiographic. As we saw in Chapter 3, Zhang is said to have received the *Scripture of Great Clarity* from Laozi and to have written a commentary to it. In addition, the preface to the variant version of the *Golden Liquor* was ascribed to him, and he is even credited with one of the *waidan* methods found in the Shangqing texts.<sup>26</sup>

Michel Strickmann suggested that these forged attributions resulted from the pledge of loyalty made by Jiangnan aristocratic families to the Celestial Masters. As alchemy and pharmacology formed an important part of those families' heritage, Strickmann wrote, "synthesis was the inevitable answer" to the question of how to deal with the local traditions facing the newly imported religion.<sup>27</sup> Isabelle Robinet provided several examples of this synthesis in her work on Shangqing Daoism. She showed, in particular, that Tao Hongjing uses the expression "Correct Unity of the Mysterious Capital of the Great Clarity" (*Taiqing xuandu zhengyi*), associating the Way of the Celestial Masters with the Great Clarity. Tao, moreover, states that "the Taiqing lineage (*Taiqing jia*) possesses the balanced pneuma (*pingqi*) of Correct Unity," that the Celestial Masters' petitions (*zhangshu*) were addressed to the heaven of Great Clarity, and that the Celestial Masters' methods for warding off demons were equivalent to those practiced by the Taiqing adepts.<sup>28</sup>

Robinet, however, also pointed out evidence that contradicts Strickmann's hypothesis. She noticed, for instance, that Tao Hongjing defines the practices of the Celestial Masters as "minor Taiqing methods" (*taiqing xiaoshu*);<sup>29</sup> more important, she also remarked that the Shangqing sources do not attribute any particular high status to Zhang Daoling, assigning him instead a relatively low rank among other "saints of the past."<sup>30</sup> This rank is consistent with the one seen above in the *Supreme Secret Essentials* (*Wushang biyao*), where Zhang Daoling is mentioned among the saints of the Great Clarity, certainly deemed to be a lower heaven by the time the *Secret Essentials* was compiled.<sup>31</sup>

The evidence pointed out by Robinet suggests, in other words, that Zhang Daoling's image in the Shangqing sources reflects the "pledge of loyalty" of the Jiangnan aristocracy not to the Celestial Masters, but to their own traditions. Seen under this light, the creation of Zhang Daoling's alchemical personality appears to be the odd result of the competition for preeminence among the different traditions of Jiangnan. One aspect of this pursuit of supremacy is particularly relevant to our topic, namely the attempts that the various traditions made to show that their teaching derived from a celestial realm higher than, or prior to, those of the other schools. Aptly defined by Stephen Bokenkamp as a striving for "cosmological priority," these attempts were the other side of the struggle for integration apparent in the formal schema of doctrines, practices, heavens, and deities related to the Three Caverns.<sup>32</sup> Cosmology, or rather cosmogony, played an important role in this



competition for priority; and it is precisely in this regard that the Celestial Masters made a subtle but effective move designed to assert their superiority among the traditions that, by the mid-fifth century, had acquired a firm footing in Jiangnan.

The original cosmogony of the Celestial Masters was rather straightforward compared to other formulations both within and outside the Daoist tradition. It envisaged three pneumas, called Mysterious, Original, and Inaugural (*xuanqi*, *yuanqi*, and *shiqi*), that the Dao issues sequentially and through which it generates the cosmos.<sup>33</sup> This description undergoes remarkable changes in the mid-fifth-century *Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens* (*Santian neijie jing*), the source containing the most comprehensive account of the Celestial Masters' "history of the Dao" both before and after the generation of the cosmos and the beginning of human history. The *Inner Explanations* associates the "illimitable Great Way" (*wuji dadao*) of Great Clarity with the Elder of the Way and Its Virtue (Daode zhangren), the first appearance of the cosmic Laozi (Laojun, here indeed still pre-cosmic) even before the generation of the Primordial Princess (Yuanjun, Laojun's mother) and of Laojun himself. The Great Clarity then produces the three pneumas mentioned above, which in turn generate the cosmos.<sup>34</sup>

The differences between these two accounts, and especially the mention of the heaven of Great Clarity in the later one, reflect the integration of the Way of the Celestial Masters into the religious traditions of Jiangnan. As Tao Hongjing also stated, the exorcistic and healing practices of the Celestial Masters represented an obvious counterpart to the lore of the earlier native traditions, which in the system of the Three Caverns were assigned the third, and lowest, rank, associated with the Great Clarity. The Celestial Masters' association with that rank and that heaven was, therefore, a natural outcome. Relating the Way of the Celestial Masters to the domain of the Great Clarity in the system of the Three Caverns, moreover, solved at once two issues: acknowledging its presence in Jiangnan, and asserting that the local traditions, in the form they took after the Shangqing and Lingbao revelations, were superior to its cults and practices.

The *Inner Explanations* contains the response of the Celestial Masters. On the one hand, they accepted their association with the heaven of Great Clarity to the point of altering their views on cosmogony: the Mysterious, Original, and Inaugural pneumas were represented in the *Inner Explanations* as issuing from the domain of Great Clarity. Precisely by doing so, however, the Celestial Masters ingeniously moved a step forward in the con-

test for “cosmological priority.” As the Great Clarity is the primordial heaven from which all other cosmogonic stages have issued, the Celestial Masters assigned it a status higher than the one it enjoyed in the schema of the Three Caverns.

Who exactly conceived the image of Zhang Daoling as an alchemist remains unknown, but the circumstances described above show how that image reflects the reciprocal relations among the different religious traditions in fifth-century Jiangnan. It seems clear that the scheme of the Three Caverns was the only framework through which the Celestial Masters could be formally integrated in those traditions, and that the only way of access for them into that framework—the two other tiers being assigned to Shangqing and Lingbao—was through an association with the heaven of Great Clarity. This confusing predicament changed within one century when, around 500 CE, four supplementary sections were added to the earlier canonical classification of teaching and practices. As we shall see in the next section of this chapter, the Way of the Celestial Masters and alchemy were assigned two of them, releasing the Celestial Masters from their formal association with the heaven of Great Clarity.

Zhang Daoling’s connections with alchemy, nevertheless, continued to be affirmed, and the stories about his knowledge of the elixirs in time actually became increasingly elaborate. If one reads the account of Zhang’s life in the fourteenth-century *Lineage of the Han Celestial Masters* (*Han tianshi shijia*) with no knowledge of the crucial role that he played in the history of Daoism, one might indeed take that account to refer to an alchemist. It relates that after studying astronomy, geography, cartography, and the apocryphal texts in his youth, Zhang went to Mount Yunjin (Yunjin shan, Jiangxi) to refine the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Heavens (*jiutian shendan*). Even the name of the Longhu shan (Mount of the Dragon and Tiger), the seat of the Celestial Masters from the Tang period onward, is related to Zhang’s alchemical prowess: “When the elixirs were achieved, a dragon and a tiger appeared, and this is why the mountain has that name.” Later, Zhang received the *Script of the Three Sovereigns*, the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, and the *Scripture of Great Clarity* on Mount Song (Songshan, Henan). After Laojun granted him the teaching of Correct Unity, Zhang continued to transmit alchemical texts to his disciples, and while traveling to other mountains he compounded the Divine Elixir in Nine Cycles (*jiuzhuan shendan*) and the Great Medicine of the Nine Efflorescences (*jiuhua dayao*). The final act of Zhang’s life in this account is also related to alchemy. He made an elixir on

the Peak of the Cloud Terrace (Yuntai feng), shared it with his closest disciples, and finally, riding a cloud, rose to heaven with his wife.<sup>35</sup>

### *The Great Clarity Supplement to the Daoist Canon*

The so-called Four Supplements (*sifu*) were appended around 500 CE to the Three Caverns, which earlier had served not only to define the relations among the various traditions of Jiangnan, but also to arrange the contents of the collections of Daoist scriptures that had begun to take shape during the fifth century. The four additional sections were designated to hold writings that could not find a proper place in the earlier and primary subdivisions—namely, those initially assigned to the lower Cavern, the heaven of Great Clarity. To maintain a semblance of unity in the newly created arrangement, three of the four supplements were formally associated with one of the three Caverns, while the fourth one, devoted to the Correct Unity—that is, the Way of the Celestial Masters—was, somewhat theoretically, associated with all three Caverns. As shown in Table 5, the *Scripture of Great Clarity* gave its name to one of the supplements; appropriately related to the Sanhuang (Three Sovereigns) Cavern, this supplement is ranked below those associated with the Shangqing and Lingbao corpora.<sup>36</sup>

Earlier in this book, we saw how the *Scripture of Great Clarity* was progressively expanded from a work in three scrolls into one in sixty-two scrolls during the Song period.<sup>37</sup> With the creation of the Four Supplements, the scripture became the core of an even larger textual corpus, known to have included 576 scrolls in the *Precious Canon of the Celestial Palace of the Great Song* (*Da Song Tiangong baozang*) of 1016. Doing so made it, at that time, the second largest supplement after the one named Great Mystery (Taixuan) and based on the *Laozi*.<sup>38</sup> As we have already remarked, this amplitude was reached mainly through the addition of works on the disciplines of Nourishing Life (*yangsheng*), which thus continued to be associated with the heaven of Great Clarity.

The import of Great Clarity as both a celestial domain and the designation of a Daoist scriptural corpus is explained as follows around 700 CE in the *Pivot of Meaning of the Daoist Teaching* (*Daojiao yishu*):

What coagulates from the pneuma of the Great Dao has a clear pneuma and a great substance (*qiqing titai*); this is why it is called Great Clarity. The fact that a celestial domain (*jing*) gives its name to [a corpus of] scriptures

TABLE 5  
The Four Supplements (sifu) to the Daoist Canon.

Cavern	Supplement	Corpora
Reality (Dongzhen)	Great Mystery (Taixuan)	Shangqing: <i>Daode jing</i>
Mystery (Dongxuan)	Great Peace (Taiping)	Lingbao: <i>Taiping jing</i>
Spirit (Dongshen)	Great Clarity (Taiqing)	Sanhuang: <i>Taiqing jing</i>
	Correct Unity (Zhengyi)	Tianshi dao

(*jing*) is now explained by the fact that these scriptures are called after the domain that they support (*fu*, i.e., for which they act as a “supplement”). Why is this so? Because these scriptures explicate the arts of the Golden Elixir (*jindan*), and those who ingest [the Golden Elixir] rise away to the Great Clarity. This is the meaning of the term Great Clarity. (*Daojiao yishu*, 2.7b–8a)

The texts in the Taiqing supplement, therefore, yield knowledge of the heaven of Great Clarity because they are deemed to originate from that celestial domain, and to serve as a support for obtaining access to it.

A few pages later, the *Pivot of Meaning of the Daoist Teaching* gives details on the purport and contents of the Three Caverns and the Four Supplements, showing how the Great Clarity and each of the other celestial domains are associated with a class of transcendent beings, mentioned in the following passage from the lower to the higher one. The texts of the Celestial Masters, instead, are said to “revere all the Three Caverns.”

One should also know how the Three Caverns and the Four Supplements support and complete each other. The *Codes and Precepts from the Scriptures and Charts of Correct Unity* (*Zhengyi jingtu kejie pin*) says:

The scriptures of Great Clarity supplement the Cavern of Spirit. They are concerned with the ranks (*pin*) of Immortals up to those who obtain their status through the Golden Elixir.

The scriptures of Great Peace supplement the Cavern of Mystery. They are concerned with the training (*ye*) of the Perfected up to those who obtain their status through the [*Scripture in*] *Ten Sections* (*jia, yi*, [and so forth; i.e., the *Scripture of Great Peace*, or *Taiping jing*]).

The scriptures of Great Mystery supplement the Cavern of Reality. They are concerned with the training of the Saints up to those who obtain their status through the *Scripture in Five Thousand Characters* (i.e., the *Laozi*).

The Normative Scripts of Correct Unity (*Zhengyi fawen*) honor the Dao and its Virtue; they revere [all] the Three Caverns, and offer the Three Vehicles (*sansheng*) to the view. (*Daojiao yishu*, 2.11b–12a)

Then the *Pivot of Meaning of the Daoist Teaching* describes the features of each supplement. Concerning the Great Clarity, it states:

The Great Clarity supplements the Cavern of Spirit because the Cavern of Spirit needs the Great Clarity to summon and control gods and demons. Preserving (*cun*) and guarding (*shou*) the Great One, and ingesting the Golden Elixir, help one to achieve this Way. Thus the function of spirit (or: one's divine faculty, *shenyong*) is extended. (*Daojiao yishu*, 2.12a)

The *Pivot of Meaning* concludes by saying that “the Great Mystery is the Great Vehicle, the Great Peace is the Middle Vehicle, the Great Clarity is the Small Vehicle (*dasheng, zhongsheng, xiaosheng*), and the Correct Unity runs through all three Vehicles.”<sup>39</sup> Like the entire passage, and beyond its terminology clearly borrowed from Buddhism, this sentence reflects the ranking of teaching and texts after the Shangqing and Lingbao revelations had placed the heaven of Great Clarity in a lower position. But the statement that the scriptures in the Cavern of Spirit deal with methods for “guarding the One,” whereas those in its Taiqing supplement are used to “summon and control gods and demons” (*zhaozhi guishen*), is worthy of attention. Meditation and alchemy are still associated with each other as they were in Ge Hong's time; the respective textual corpora, however, are now distinguished from each other, with alchemy serving as a supplementary discipline to meditation.

By including the heaven of Great Clarity in the system of the Three Caverns, and later by designating after it one of the Four Supplements to the collections of Daoist texts, the creators of the religious taxonomy of Jiangnan assigned the Taiqing tradition a permanent place within the system that formally defined the identity of Daoism in medieval China. The low rank attributed to the Great Clarity in that system reflects the priority accorded to new revelations that served to frame two new, higher systems of practice: Daoist meditation and Daoist ritual.

In later times, the original identity of the Great Clarity as a component of this taxonomy became increasingly blurred. The alchemical tradition—probably also in response to the events that we have surveyed in this chapter—moved to a different direction, giving rise to new forms of doctrines and practices whose main features will be examined in the final chapter of this book. As for the Great Clarity supplement, nothing is known about its contents in any of the Daoist Canons compiled before the current one, printed

in 1445. With a noticeable decrease from the figure given above for the Song Canon, the Great Clarity section of the current Canon contains twenty-five works. Among them is the Ge Hong's *Inner Chapters*, but no *waidan* text. The decline and final disappearance of the Taiqing tradition, and the loss of texts that were part of this section in the Canon of the late Six Dynasties, left space for the inclusion of writings unrelated to the original alchemical revelations of the heaven of Great Clarity.



**Part Four**  
**Texts of the Great Clarity**





## SCRIPTURE OF THE NINE ELIXIRS

The text translated below is found in the first chapter of the *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* (Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor). This and other works on the Nine Elixirs (see below, Appendix B) are referred to in my comments as follows:

<i>Jiudan jingjue</i>	<i>Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue</i> (CT 885), j. 2–20
“Secret Instructions”	“Jiuding dan yin wenjue,” in <i>Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue</i> , 20.7a–15b
<i>Scripture of the Liquid Pearl</i>	<i>Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing</i> (CT 952)

References to page numbers in the *Daozang* text are given in brackets within the translation. Passages indented and within parentheses, introduced by “NOTE,” are editorial notes found in the *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue*, often without formal distinction from the main text. My comments are printed in smaller type.

[1A] The Yellow Emperor (Huangdi) received the Culminant Way of the Reverted Elixirs (*huandan zhidao*) from the Mysterious Woman (Xuannü), who

is a celestial woman. The Yellow Emperor compounded and ingested them, and thereby rose to heaven as an immortal.

The Mysterious Woman announced to the Yellow Emperor:

All those who want to live a long life, but do not obtain the Divine Elixirs (*shendan*) and the Golden Liquor (*jinye*), merely bring suffering upon themselves. Practicing breathing and *daoyin*, exhaling the old and inhaling the new breath, and ingesting medicines of herbs and plants can extend the length of one's life, but do not allow one to escape death.

The *Jiudan jingjue*, 4.1a, 5.1a–b, and 7.1a–2a, elaborates on the relation of alchemy to various other practices, quoting passages from *Baopu zi*, 6.124, 5.112–13, and 9.177 (trans. Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of A.D. 320, 113–14, 103, and 164*). On this subject see also above, Chapter 7.

When a man ingests the Divine Elixirs, he becomes a divine immortal (*shenxian*) and transcends the generations [of mortals]. He will be coeternal with Heaven and Earth, and as luminous as the Sun and the Moon; seated, he will see ten thousand miles away, and will have gods and demons (*guishen*) at his service. He will rise into the Void (*xu*) with his whole family, and will fly even though he has no wings. Mounting the clouds and steering a chariot pulled by dragons, he will roam in the Great Clarity (Taiqing) and in one instant will tour the eight poles (*baji*). He will not halt in front of a river, and will not fear the hundred poisons (*baidu*).

The states of Eternal Man and Man of Light are mentioned together in several works. Guangcheng zi, the master of the Yellow Emperor, states for instance in the *Zhuangzi*: “I am as luminous as the Sun and the Moon, and am coeternal with Heaven and Earth” (27/11/43). According to the *Huainan zi* (Book of the Master of Huainan), 20.2b, “the Great Man merges his virtue (*de*) with Heaven and Earth, and merges his light (*ming*) with the Sun and the Moon.” For a similar phrase in the *Chuci* (Elegies of Chu) see above, pp. 15–16. On the heaven of Great Clarity see Chapter 2. The eight poles represent the totality of the world as well as its farthest reaches. In the *Zhuangzi*, similarly to the *Nine Elixirs*, the saintly man “rides the vapors of the clouds” and “journeys beyond the Four Seas (*sihai*)” (2/1/29 and 6/2/72). In Daoism, as in other doctrines, space is an image for the non-dual state; see Larre, *Le Traité VII du Houai Nan Tseu*, 152–53.

The Yellow Emperor transmitted this Way to the Mysterious Master (Xu-anzi), and admonished him saying:

This Way is of supreme importance, and can be transmitted only to those who are worthy of it. Let it not be disclosed to those who are not fit to receive it, even if [1b] they collect heaps of gold as high as mountains, or if they own ten thousand miles of land. Obtaining just one of these elixirs is enough to become an immortal: it is not required to obtain all nine of them.

*Rules for the transmission.* Throw a golden figurine of a man weighing nine ounces and a golden figurine of a fish weighing three ounces into an east-flowing stream, and utter an oath (*shi*). Both should be provided by the one who receives this Way. Before this, undertake the purification practices (*zhai*) and perform the ablutions (*muyu*). On the banks of the stream, in a place unfrequented by other people, arrange a seat for the Mysterious Woman. Burn some incense and announce to Heaven: “I wish to transmit the Way to obtain a long life to (*name of the recipient*)!” Lay the *Scripture of the Elixirs* on a stand, and place the seat [for the Mysterious Woman] there.

The seat (*zuo*) is the place where the divinity comes to observe the ceremony. The *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.3a, gives directions for setting up a seat for the Great One (Taiyi); see above, p. 82. After “Lay the *Scripture of the Elixirs*,” the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.3b, adds: “and the tokens for the covenant” (*mengxin zhi wu*). On the ceremony of transmission in other Taiqing texts and on the preliminary purification practices see above, Chapter 5.

When you are ready to transmit the Way, face north and do not disclose it for one [double] hour (*yishi*). If the sky is clear and there is no wind, the Way can be transmitted. [Master and disciple] seal their covenant by drinking together some blood of a white chicken. Transmit the oral instructions and the essentials of the compounding of the elixirs, and throw the golden figurines of the man and the fish into the stream. This is done so that the multitudes of those who are not suited for becoming a divine immortal never see this Way.

The presence of wind is also the first of the Six Adversities that hinder the compounding of elixirs; see above, p. 86. In the *Huainan zi*, 3.2a, wind is said to be a sign of the anger of Heaven. “Those who are not suited for becoming a divine immortal” is literally “those who do not have the bones of a divine immortal,” i.e., who do not have an inner constitution fit to obtain immortality. On the marks of transcendence in Daoism see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 298.

[2a] The Yellow Emperor said:

When you want to compound the Divine Elixirs you should dwell in the depths of a mountain, in a wide moorland, or in a place deserted and unin-

habited for endless miles. If you compound them among other people you should stay behind thick, high walls, so that nothing can be seen between the inside and the outside. Your companions should not number more than two or three.

The *Liquid Pearl*, 1.5b, adds: “When two men are joined in their hearts, their strength can break metal.” This sentence comes from the *Xici* (Appended Commentaries) section of the *Yijing* (Book of Changes), 41/VI, concerning the hexagram *tongren*, “People joined together.” On the alchemist’s helpers and their role in the compounding of the elixir helpers see above, pp. 16–18.

First undertake the purification practices for seven days, and increase your purity with ablutions and the five fragrances (*wuxiang*). Do not pass by filth and dirt, or by houses where mourning is being observed, or by houses inhabited by women of the age of marriage.

On the “five fragrances” see above, p. 88; and Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 358.

The Yellow Emperor said:

When you want to purchase the Divine Medicines for the elixirs, first undertake the purification practices for seven days, and perform the ablutions on a day marked by the character *zi* or *chou*. You should buy the ingredients on an appointed day and in a place governed by the Virtue of the Month (*yuede*). Do not bargain over their price.

*Zi* and *chou* are the first Earthly Branches (*dizhi*). On this and other rules for the purchase of the ingredients see above, pp. 86–87.

The Mysterious Woman said:

To prepare the Medicines, the fifth day of the fifth month is most auspicious, followed by the seventh day of the seventh month. It is good to start on a *jiazi* or a *dingsi* day, or on a day of Opening (*kai*) or Removal (*chu*). The next best are the *jiashen*, *yisi*, or *yimao* days. The days on which the preparation of the Medicines is forbidden are:

in spring, *wuchen* and *jisi*;  
in summer, *dingsi*, *wushen*, *renchen*, and *jiwei*;  
in autumn, *wuxu* [2b], *xinhai*, and *gengzi*;  
in winter, *wuyin*, *jiwei*, *guimao*, and *guiyou*.

The day of the Killer of the Month (*yuesha*), the days in which the Branch (*zhi*) and the Stem (*gan*) are in opposition, the day of Receiving (*shou*), as

well as the *renwu*, *bingxu*, *guihai*, and *xinsi* days in the first, second, and third months of each season, the day of Establishment (*yuejian*), and those of new and full moon, are all inauspicious and cannot be used for starting the fire.<sup>1</sup>

On the auspicious and inauspicious days for kindling the fire see above, p. 97.

When you compound the Divine Medicines, beware of intercourse with common and dull people. Do not let the envious, those who talk too much, and those who do not have faith in this Way hear or know about it. If they do, the compounding of the Divine Medicines would not be successful.

On interdictions and taboos that govern the compounding of elixirs see above, pp. 85–86. Seeing envious people, in particular, is the second of the Four Calamities (*sibai*; see p. 86). After “beware of intercourse with common and dull people,” the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.6a, and the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.7b, add: “and with women, children, houses where mourning is being observed, and impure people.”

When you achieve success in making the Medicines you will become a Perfected (*zhenren*). You will rise to heaven and enter the abyss, you will transform yourself and be “vague and indistinct” (*huanghu*). You will become an immortal with your family: how could you do that alone?

In other words, the adept will have the same qualities as the Dao itself, which is “vague and indistinct” (*Laozi* 14 and 21). “Rising to heaven and entering the abyss” (*shangtian ruyuan*) refers to the ability to move freely along the axis that connects different states of being.

The common people are fond of wealth, and do not compound the alchemical Medicines. They believe in medicines obtained from herbs and plants, but these putrefy when buried, decompose when boiled, and burn when heated. If those medicines cannot keep themselves alive, how could they do so for humans? They can heal illnesses and increase the pneuma (*qi*) but cannot make one escape death. Only a few can hear the essentials of the Culminant Way of the Reverted Elixirs.

Here the *Nine Elixirs* refers again to the superiority of elixirs compared to herbal drugs, as it also does in one of the initial sentences. On elixirs and herbal drugs see above, Chapter 7.

[3a] The Yellow Emperor said:

When you start the fire you should perform a ceremony (*ji*) beside the crucible. Take five pints of good quality white liquor, three pounds of dried ox

meat, the same amount of dried mutton, two pints of yellow millet and rice, three pints of large dates, one peck of pears, thirty cooked chicken's eggs, and three carp, each weighing three pounds. Place them on three stands, and on each stand burn incense in two cups.

The *Liquid Pearl*, 1.5b–6a, avoids the offering of animal products: it does not mention eggs and carp, and replaces “dried ox meat” with “several fragrant cakes.”

Pay obeisance twice and utter the following invocation:

This petty man, (*name of the officiant*), verily and entirely devotes his thoughts to the Great Lord of the Dao (Da Daojun), Lord Lao (Laojun), and the Lord of the Great Harmony (Taihe jun). Alas, this petty man, (*name of the officiant*), covets the Medicines of Life!<sup>2</sup> Lead him so that the Medicines will not volatilize and be lost, but rather be fixed by fire! Let the Medicines be good and efficacious, let the transmutations take place without hesitation, and let the Yellow and the White be entirely fixed! When he ingests the Medicines, let him fly as an immortal, have audience at the Purple Palace (Zigong), live an unending life, and become an accomplished man (*zhiren*)!

On the three deities mentioned in the invocation see above, p. 15, and the passage quoted from the *Central Scripture of Laozi* (*Laozi zhong-jing*), p. 43. In the version of the “Secret Instructions,” 20.2a–b, and the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.5b–6a, after the adept states that he “covets the Medicines of Life,” he offers the liquor, rises, and pays obeisance nine times. Moreover, according to both the “Secret Instructions” and the *Liquid Pearl*, at the beginning of the invocation the adept should announce to Heaven his intention of compounding the Nine Elixirs, and declare that he also devotes his thoughts to several female deities: the Jade Women, the Mysterious Woman, the Pure Woman, and the Jade Women with the Azure Waistband (*qingyao yunü*). The Purple Palace is in the constellation of the Northern Dipper, at the center of the cosmos.

Offer the liquor, rise, and pay obeisance two more times. Finally offer kaya nuts, mandarins, and pomelos. After that, the fire may be started according to the method.

A more elaborate rite for kindling the fire, called Ceremony of the Nine Elixirs (*jiudan ji*), is described in the *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.3a–b; see above, pp. 97–98.

The Yellow Emperor said:

When you want to make the Divine Elixirs, you should always first prepare the Mysterious and Yellow (*xuanhuang*).

## METHOD OF THE MYSTERIOUS AND YELLOW

[3b] Take ten pounds of quicksilver (*shuiyin*) and twenty pounds of lead (*qian*). Place them in an iron vessel, making the fire underneath intense. The lead and the quicksilver will breathe out their Essence and Flower (*jinghua*), which will be purple or like gold in color. Gather and collect it with an iron spoon.

On the Mysterious and Yellow and its role in the Taiqing methods see above, Chapter 4. The method of the *Nine Elixirs* is also found in the *Jiudan jingjue*, 17.2a–b, and the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.15a–b; for another translation see Sivin, “The Theoretical Background of Elixir Alchemy,” 256. According to the *Jiudan jingjue*, 17.2b, quicksilver should first be boiled thirty-six times, or it can be used in a coagulated (*ning*) state. Lead should be refined five times. The *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.15a, has “nine pounds of quicksilver and one pound of lead,” and “earthenware crucible” for “iron vessel.” It also states that firing should take place “from dawn to the second half of the ninth hour” (the ninth double hour, *shen*, corresponding to 3–5 P.M., was divided into two parts, *shangbu* and *xiabu*). Note that in the *Nine Elixirs* an iron vessel is used only to prepare the Mysterious and Yellow and the Mud of the Six-and-One; the other methods use an earthenware crucible.

This is the Mysterious and Yellow; some call it Yellow Essence (*huang-jing*), others Yellow Sprouts (*huangya*), and others Yellow and Weightless (*huangqing*).

The synonyms given in the *Jiudan jingjue*, 17.2b, are Yellow Sprouts and Dragon’s Weightlessness (*longqing*). Those given in the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.15b, are Weightless Sublimate (*feiqing*) and Sublimate Liquid (*feiliu*).

Place this Medicine in a bamboo cylinder, steam it one hundred times, and sublimate it with aqueous solutions of realgar (*xionghuang*) and cinnabar (*dansha*).

(NOTE: The solutions of realgar and cinnabar are part of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions.)

As remarked in the note by the editor of the *Nine Elixirs*, the methods for liquefying realgar and cinnabar are found in the *Sanshiliu shuifa* (Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions; CT 930, 1b–2a and 2b; trans. Ts’ao, Ho, and Needham, “An Early Mediaeval Chinese Alchemical Text on Aqueous Solutions,” 125–26). Both are quoted in the *Jiudan jingjue*, 8.4a–b. The “Secret Instructions,” 20.7b–9a, gives the method



for sublimating the Mysterious and Yellow with the two solutions; see above, pp. 102–3.

[The Yellow Emperor] said:

You should also prepare the Mud of the Six-and-One (*liuyi ni*).

METHOD OF THE MUD [OF THE SIX-AND-ONE]

Use alum (*fanshi*), Turkestan salt (*rongyan*), lake salt (*luxian*), and arsenolite (*yushi*), heating them first for twenty days; also use left-oriented oyster shells (*zuogu muli*) from Donghai, red clay (*chishi zhi*), and talc (*huashi*). Take the desired amount of these seven substances in equal parts, and pound them together ten thousand times until they become powder-like.

On the Mud of the Six-and-One see above, Chapter 4. Donghai is in present-day Shandong. The *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.15a, explains: “Observe the earthenware crucible and make the desired amount [of mud], so that it will be enough for luting the crucible.”

Place them together in an iron vessel, and heat them for nine days and nine nights, making the fire underneath intense. When the Medicines take on a vivid scarlet color like fire, [4a] pound them again ten thousand times. Sift them through a piece of thin silk, and add them to a hundred-day Flowery Pond (*huachi*), forming a mud.

On the Flowery Pond see above, p. 105.

When you start [compounding the elixirs], use this mud to lute a red earthenware crucible (*chitu fu*) holding eight or nine pints, or at most one peck.

The “Explanations” (“Jie”) in the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.4b, has “one and a half peck.” It adds that “in the districts of Xingyang, Henan, and Luoyang, and in the commandery of Yingchuan, an earthenware crucible costs at most fourteen or fifteen coins (*qian*).” The three districts are in present-day Henan, while Yingchuan is in nearby northwestern Anhui.

Smear the crucible with the mud both inside and outside, making each layer three-tenths of an inch thick, and let it dry in the sun for ten days. Then take some white lead (*hufen*), and heat it until it becomes golden. Place it in a hundred-day Flowery Pond with an equal amount of the Mysterious and Yellow prepared earlier.

The “Explanations,” 1.4a–b, adds: “Make it into a mud, and pound it ten thousand times.” Also according to a similar passage in the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.15b, white lead should be “added to an equal

quantity of Mysterious and Yellow in vinegar, pounded ten thousand times, and made into a mud.”

Lute [again] the crucible with this compound, both inside and outside, making each layer three-tenths of an inch thick. Leave the crucible in the sun for ten days so that it becomes completely dry, whereupon you use it to sublimate the *Flower of Cinnabar*.

The *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.15b adds: “Do not let there be scorches and cracks; if there are any, tend them immediately with the Mud.” The *Flower of Cinnabar* is the first of the Nine Elixirs.

*Another method.* Prepare the Crucible of the Medicines (*yaofu*) and the Mud of the Six-and-One. When both are ready, put the crucible in a closed jar and let it dry in the shade. Keep the jar three or four feet from the ground, and avoid humidity.

[FIRST ELIXIR: FLOWER OF CINNABAR]

The First Divine Elixir is called *Flower of Cinnabar* (*danhua*).

The name of this elixir can also be rendered as Cinnabar Flower, where “flower” denotes the sublimate and “cinnabar” is its color: as said below, the elixir “sometimes will be of a vivid scarlet color like cinnabar.” The *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.15b–16b, describes a similar method where cinnabar is refined with realgar and orpiment; as the Mysterious and Yellow does in the methods of the *Nine Elixirs*, these two minerals incorporate Yin and Yang in the crucible. For another translation of this section of the *Nine Elixirs* see Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of A.D. 320, 78–79*.

To prepare it, use one, two, or ten pounds of Real Powder (*zhensha*, cinnabar), in the desired amount according to your wealth.

Real Powder is a secret name of cinnabar. In the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.4b, the ingredient of this elixir is called Vermilion Child (*zhu'er*), an abbreviated form of Vermilion Child Who Descends on the Mound (*jiangling zhu'er*), which the *Shiyao erya* (Synonymic Dictionary of the Materia Medica; CT 901), 1.1b, lists among the synonyms of cinnabar. The corresponding method in the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing* designates cinnabar by its common name, *dansha* (“cinnabar powder”).

Place it in a crucible

[4b] (NOTE: Someone says that the Powder should be covered with pounded lake salt.)

and smear the mouths [of the two halves] with the Mud of the Six-and-One. Make the joints tightly fit together so that there is no loss [of pnuma].

As is suggested by a sentence below, where the crucible is called “red earthenware crucible of the Mysterious and Yellow,” the vessel should also be luted with a layer of the quicksilver-lead compound. The same is stated further on in a reference to the method of the First Elixir (1.14a). The direction to cover the cinnabar with lake salt instead is not given in the other texts on the Nine Elixirs.

Carefully examine the crucible, and make sure that there are no cracks, even as thin as a hair. The Medicine would otherwise entirely volatilize and lose its Essence and Flower, and the ingestion of the mere residue would be of no benefit. You can use the crucible after you have smeared it and left it to dry for ten days.

(NOTE: If it is not dry it cannot be placed over the fire.)

First keep the crucible five inches above a fire of horse manure or chaff, and heat it for nine days and nine nights. Then increase the fire so that it touches the crucible, for nine more days and nights. [Then put the crucible over the fire, for nine more days and nights.] Finally let the fire cover the lower [half of the] crucible for nine more days and nights. After thirty-six days altogether, you can extinguish the fire and let the crucible cool for one day.

The sentence in brackets, which is missing in the received version of the *Nine Elixirs*, is found in the “Explanations” of the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.5a. The omission in the *Nine Elixirs* is certainly due to a copying error: the text says here that heating takes thirty-six days, and adds below that if the whole process has to be repeated, it would require seventy-two days altogether. The summary in the *Baopu zi*, 4.74, also has “thirty-six days.” On the heating method in the Taiqing texts see pp. 105–7.

The Medicine will have entirely sublimated, and will adhere to the upper crucible. It will be similar to the five-colored *langgan*, to shooting stars, or to frost and snow. Sometimes it will be of a vivid scarlet color like cinnabar, sometimes it will be azure and sometimes purple. Collect it by brushing it off with a feather. One pound will have reduced to only four ounces.

On the *langgan*, a mythical tree that grows on Mount Kunlun, see above, p. 59. In the directions given by the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.2a–b, the elixir should be collected with the feather of a three-year-old chicken. A method for opening the crucible is found in the *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.16a–b; see above, p. 107.

If the Medicine has not been fixed by the fire, it must be sublimated again. Add it to Liquor of the Mysterious Water (*xuanshui ye*) and to Grease of Dragons (*longgao ze*). Mix to make the compound moist, and put it again [5a] in the red earthenware crucible of the Mysterious and Yellow (*xuanhuang chitu fu*). Seal the joints as in the initial method. Sublimate the compound over an intense fire for thirty-six days, and the Medicine will form after altogether seventy-two days.

The “Secret Instructions,” 20.13a–b, explains that the Liquor of the Mysterious Water is an aqueous solution of magnetite. According to the same text, 20.9a–10a, the Grease of Dragons is usually obtained by leaving seven worms under salt in a vessel. However, says the text, since killing small creatures for one’s own benefit goes against the principles of benevolence (*ren*) and sympathy (*ceyin*), the term *longgao* can also be understood as *xilong gao* (Fat of the Western Dragons), which is a secret name of the dew collected on mulberry trees. The Grease of Dragons is variously called *longgao*, *longgao ze*, *longgao tong*, or *tulong gao* in the *Nine Elixirs*.

When you want to ingest the Medicine, undertake the purification practices, observe the precepts (*jie*), and perform the ablutions for five times over seven days. At dawn, burning some incense, kneel down and pay obeisance facing east. Ingest the Medicine in pills the size of large grains of millet, or of small beans.

According to the “Secret Instructions,” 20.10a, this elixir should be ingested at the beginning of a sixty-day cycle.

A superior man will rise to heaven after he ingests it for seven days, an ordinary man will obtain immortality after he ingests it for seventy days, and a dull man will obtain immortality after he ingests it for one year. After you have prepared it, it will be good to use the crucible of the *Flower of Cinnabar* to sublimate the Second Elixir and all the Nine Divine Elixirs.

The Mysterious Woman said:

After you prepare the *Flower of Cinnabar*, you should test it by making gold with it. If gold forms, the making of the Medicine has been successful. If it does not form, it has not been successful: the Medicine has not been fixed by fire, and cannot be ingested. This is because you have not luted the crucible hermetically, or because you have transgressed against the precepts.

On transmuting the elixir into gold see above, pp. 107–8; on making vessels with alchemical gold see pp. 32–33.

She [also] said:

Sublimate the Medicine again as in the previous method. To test it, add to it some Grease of Dragons, and make it into pills the size of small beans. Place them [5b] over an intense fire and blow the fire with a bellows. Gold will form in the time it takes to have a meal.

Gold also will form by projecting twenty-four scruples of *Flower of Cinnabar* onto one pound of powdered mercury (*hong*). When gold has formed, make it into a cylinder and store the Medicine in it. Similarly, if you pour one scruple of *Flower of Cinnabar* onto one pound of mercury or lead, put it over a fierce flame, and blow to make the fire increasingly intense, the whole will form gold. Be careful not to use excessive amounts [of the ingredients], or the gold will be hard; but if there is not enough, the gold will be soft. Neither would be malleable.

Twenty-four scruples (*zhu*) correspond to one ounce (*jin*).

The Mysterious Woman also said:

If you prepare gold, you can transcend the generations [of mortals]  
 If you do not prepare it, you can hardly secure your destiny.  
 Doing nothing but harm to yourself,  
 Where would you find repair?

[SECOND ELIXIR: DIVINE TALLY]

The Second Elixir is called *Divine Tally* (*shenfu*).

As is made clear in the “Secret Instructions,” 20.11a–13b, the section on the Second Elixir consists of three parts that concern the *Divine Tally*, the *Yellow Essence*, and the *Reverted Elixir of the Divine Tally*, respectively. A “fourth method,” mentioned and very concisely described in the “Secret Instructions,” 20.13b–14a, does not correspond to any of those found in the texts on the Nine Elixirs. The current text of the *Baopu zi*, 4.75, states that this elixir is called “Divine Elixir (*shendan*) or Divine Tally.” Three texts that quote Ge Hong’s summary of the *Nine Elixirs*, however, have only “Divine Tally”; see *Jiudan jingjue*, 2.2a, *Shenxian jinzhuo jing* (= *Baopu zi shenxian jinzhuo jing*; CT 917), 3.1a, and *Yunji qiqian* (Seven Lots from the Bookcase of the Clouds; CT 1032), 67.7b.

Take quicksilver free from poison, in the desired amount. Place it in a crucible smeared with the Mud of the Six-and-One, which you should seal and let dry exactly as in the method for compounding the *Flower of Cinnabar*. Sublimate it nine times above and nine times below.

“Nine times above and nine times below” refers to turning the crucible upside down at the end of each cycle. The “Secret Instructions,” 20.11b, explains this process in more detail: “Place the crucible on three iron pots (*tieguo*) nine inches over the ground, and keep it on a fire of chaff for one day and one night. Then turn it upside down without opening it, and [heat it] again for one day and one night. Turn it upside down in this way nine times altogether.” The same method is used for heating the Eighth Elixir.

Let the crucible cool, and open it. Collect the elixir by brushing it [with a feather], and add to it some carp gall (*liyu dan*). [6a] Then smear and seal the crucible once more as before, and sublimate the elixir again, nine times above and nine times below. Let the crucible cool, and open it. Collect the elixir by brushing it [with a feather], and add to it some Grease of Dragons. This is the *Divine Tally*.

On the use of carp gall with mercury see below, p. 177. The “Secret Instructions,” 20.11b, replaces “Grease of Dragons” with “Grease of Western Dragons” and, as we have seen above, explains this term as meaning dew collected on mulberry trees.

Take ten pounds of Yellow Flower of Lead (*qian huanghua*), put it in a vessel, and heat it over a fire of charcoal. Pour seven pounds of quicksilver onto the lead, make an intense fire, and in one instant their Essence and Flower will arise together.

Except for the amounts of the ingredients, the method described here is the same as the one given above for making the Mysterious and Yellow. “Yellow Flower of Lead” usually denotes massicot or minium, but also refers to refined lead (see *Shiyao erya*, 1.1a).

Their appearance will be similar to gold. They will also resemble shooting stars, the purple and scarlet Liquid Pearl (*liuzhu*), and the five-colored Mysterious and Yellow. Gather and collect the Essence and Flower with an iron spoon. You will obtain ten pounds, which you should transmute in nine cycles [with the *Divine Tally*].

The method for the transmutation in nine cycles is found in the “Secret Instructions,” 20.11b–12b. The Mysterious and Yellow is divided into nine parts; each of them is further divided into two parts, which are used as the lower and upper layer in a crucible containing the *Divine Tally* (the “quicksilver nine times sublimated,” *jiufei shuiyin*). The sublimate is collected, placed in the crucible with two more layers of Mysterious and Yellow, and sublimated again. The process is repeated nine times alto-

gether. This method is the same as the one for making the Liquid Pearl (“Secret Instructions,” 20.8a–9a; see above, p. 103), which is also mentioned in the present paragraph of the *Nine Elixirs*.

This is the Yellow of the Elixir Flower (*danhua zhi huang*); some call it Liquor of the Mysterious and Yellow (*xuanhuang zhi ye*), and others Talisman of Heaven and Earth (*tiandi zhi fu*).

The *Liquid Pearl*, 1.8a, has “Cinnabar-Yellow Flower” (*danhuang zhi hua*) for “Yellow of the Elixir Flower.”

Pounded, it transmutes mercury into an elixir called Reverted Elixir (*huan-dan*). The sages keep this method secret, and the common practitioners (*daoshi*) cannot know or see it. Only those who are extremely penetrating can know it.

The “Secret Instructions,” 20.12b, describes the method for this transmutation, which consists of heating one pound of mercury and pouring a small quantity of *Divine Tally* onto it. On the term “practitioners” see above, pp. 17–18.

Fire is called Child-Light (*ziming*), and mercury too is called Child-Light. The One (*yi*) is the Essence of Lead (*qianjing*); some call it Great Yin (*taiyin*), others Duke Metal (*jingong*), others River Chariot (*heche*), others the Handsome Maiden (*chanü*), and others “quickly conquered stone” (*lizhi shi*).

Here begins the second part of the section concerning the Second Elixir. The sense of this passage is that just as fire originates from the Sun (light), so too mercury issues from cinnabar (which is also associated with light; see above, Chapter 4). Because of their common association with light, the offspring of the Sun and cinnabar (i.e., fire and mercury) share the same name. The text in the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.8b, is different: “The Essence of Cinnabar generates the Sun, which is light. The son of the Sun is fire; therefore, fire is called Child-Light.” Here cinnabar represents the Yang principle from which both the Sun and fire are derived. As for lead, it represents, in its native state, the Yin principle. In this passage, the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* lays out some notions that would acquire primary importance in the later alchemical tradition, in which the extraction of Real Yin from Yang (refined mercury from cinnabar) and of Real Yang from Yin (refined lead from native lead) constitutes the basic form of the alchemical process.

[6b] The inferior and foolish people who compound the elixirs only use the “quickly conquered stone” found on the mountains. They are wrong, as the

Perfected say that the Stone Gall (*shidan*) is always obtained from lead. The common people who foolishly compound the Divine Medicines instead use the Stone Gall that comes from the lands of the Qiang. This is mistaken, and is ten thousand miles away from the Way; it is the reason why the Medicine cannot be successfully compounded.

In other words, those who misunderstand the expression “quickly conquered stone” as a synonym of chalcantinite use chalcantinite instead of lead to compound the elixirs. (“Quickly conquered stone” is a synonym for both lead and chalcantinite; see *Shiyao erya*, 1.2a and 1.2b.) “Stone Gall” is the common name of chalcantinite, but since “quickly conquered stone” must be taken as a secret name of lead, the same is true for “Stone Gall.” The Qiang inhabited a region included among present-day Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan.

The Perfected say that the Essence of Cinnabar (*dansha jing*) should be transmuted into the Liquid Pearl (*liuzhu*) and into Frost and Snow (*shuangxue*), and that the Essence of Lead (*qianjing*) should be transmuted into a Reverted Elixir and into the Yellow and White (*huangbai*).

“Liquid Pearl” here is a synonym for mercury obtained by refining cinnabar; see *Shiyao erya*, 1.1b. The terms “Frost” and “Snow” too are part of several secret names for refined mercury. “Yellow and White” usually denotes gold and silver, and the reason for its mention in relation to the Essence of Lead is unclear to me. In a description of the method for making the Mysterious and Yellow, the *Jiudan jingjue*, 12.1b, has “White Snow” (*baixue*) instead of “Yellow and White”; this reading may be preferable.

By obtaining and ingesting them, you become a divine immortal. If you do not use these two substances to compound the Medicines, even though you may obtain an elixir and ingest it, you would still be awaiting death.

Great Yin is lead, and Great Yang is cinnabar.

Cinnabar is mentioned in this sentence as the mineral that produces refined mercury.

Take nine pounds of mercury and one pound of lead, and put them together in a red earthenware crucible over an intense fire, from dawn until midday or the first half of the ninth hour (*shangbu*).

(NOTE: Someone says until sunset.)

On the *shangbu* hour see above, p. 165. The variant pointed out by the editor of the *Nine Elixirs* corresponds to the reading of the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.9b.



The Essences of quicksilver and lead will arise together, and will be like gold in color. This is the *Yellow Essence* (*huangjing*); some call it Yellow Sprouts, others Yellow and Weightless, and others Yellow Flower (*huanghua*). If it is heated with pure water from a well, its name is Yellow Flowery Pond (*huang huachi*); [7a] some call it Yellow Dragon (*huanglong*), others Yellow Feed (*huangfu*), and others “quickly conquered stone.”

The method described above is yet another variant of the one for making the Mysterious and Yellow. The synonyms Yellow Essence, Yellow Sprouts, and Yellow and Weightless have already appeared above in the section on the Mysterious and Yellow.

Take the Mysterious and Yellow [just prepared], and add it to Liquor of the Mysterious Water, making it similar to the sealing mud.

On the Liquor of the Mysterious Water see above, p. 169. The “Secret Instructions,” 12b–13a, describes a preliminary step: “[After you prepare the Mysterious and Yellow,] add to it some Water of the Mysterious and Yellow in Nine Cycles of the Liquid Pearl (*liuzhu jiu zhuan xuanhuang shui*) . . . and make it into a mud. Heat it in a vessel until it becomes scarlet; then add to it some Liquor of the Mysterious Water.”

Shape it into pills, and place it in a red earthenware crucible. Smear the crucible with the Mud of the Six-and-One to a thickness of three-tenths of an inch both inside and outside.<sup>3</sup> Let the crucible dry for ten days so that there are no leaks [of pneuma]. Heat it for eighty days over a fire of horse manure or chaff, and you will obtain a Golden Medicine (*jinyao*).

Instead of “eighty days,” the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.10b, has “eighty-one days,” which is likely to be the correct reading.

Similarly, if you take a speck of Mysterious and Yellow, place it in a crucible over an intense fire, and blow it with a bellows, it will melt and form gold within the time it takes to have a meal.

*Daogui*, here translated as “speck,” denotes a minute quantity of powdered medicinal substance. Tao Hongjing (456–536) fixed its value in “one-tenth of an inch-square spatula”; see the quotation from his *Bencao jing jizhu* (Collected Commentaries to the Canonical Pharmacopoeia) in *Chongxiu Zhenghe jingshi zhenglei beiyong bencao* (The Newly Revised Practical Pharmacopoeia of the Zhenghe Period, with Examples and Classifications Based on the Classics and the Histories), 1.35.

If gold does not form, the Medicine is still raw (*sheng*) and cannot be used. You should place it again in the red earthenware crucible, seal it with the mud as before, and heat it again for eighty days. Then you can ingest it.

Here, too, the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.7a, has “eighty-one days” for “eighty days.” The method for transmuting the Mysterious and Yellow into gold is the same as that given above for the transmutation of the *Flower of Cinnabar*.

The Mysterious and Yellow is called by some Fixed Elixir (*fudan*), and by others Purple Powder (*zifen*).

Fixed Elixir is also the name of the Eighth Elixir, but the method for its compounding has no correspondance to the one described above.

When you want to ingest the elixir, at the dawn of a *jiazi* day, pay obeisance twice facing east. Ingest it in pills the size of small beans. By swallowing one pill a day for one hundred days you will become a divine immortal. It also will heal the ten thousand diseases, and cure convulsions and leprosy. [7b] There is no illness it will not treat.

Then again add the Mysterious and Yellow to a hundred-day Flowery Pond, so that it becomes like mud.<sup>4</sup>

Here begins the third and last part of the section concerning the Second Elixir.

Coat a double red earthenware crucible with it, to a thickness of three-tenths of an inch both inside and outside. Place one or even ten pounds of quicksilver in the crucible, according to the amount of Medicine that you intend to prepare. Three pounds can make one person into an immortal, and from them you can obtain ten ounces of Essence of the Mysterious and Yellow. Therefore take three pounds of mercury and place it in the earthenware crucible. Cover the mercury with more Mysterious and Yellow to a thickness of about two inches. Close the crucible with its other half, and seal both of them outside and inside with the Mud of the Six-and-One, making the joints tightly fit together so that there are no leaks [of pneuma]. Leave the crucible in the sun for ten days so that it becomes completely dry. Then place it over the fire; if it is humid this is not possible, as it would break when you heat it.

As in the method for compounding the *Flower of Cinnabar*, heat the crucible for nine days and nine nights over a fire of horse manure or chaff.

As seen above, the compounding of the *Flower of Cinnabar* requires, according to the *Nine Elixirs*, four phases of nine days each. This contradiction can only be explained by assuming that here the text mentions only one of the four heating cycles, and that the sentence translated above should be read as meaning “heat the crucible for [four cycles of] nine days and nine nights.”

Let the crucible cool for one day and open it. The Medicine will have entirely sublimated, and will adhere to the upper half of the crucible. Its appearance will be like frost and snow; it will be purple, red, vermilion, and green, like a five-colored luminous efflorescence. It will have a thickness of two inches or more. Brush it with a feather to collect it, and add to it the gall of a yellow dog (*huanggou dadan*), [8a] or the Leftover Fishes of the Count of the River (*hebo yuyu*).

(NOTE: The “Instructions” say that these are the carp gall. [Moreover] someone says that the Mysterious and Yellow should be made similar to the sealing mud. According to a note, this substance to be made into a pellet is what the “Instructions” call Water Spring [*shuiquan*].)

It is not clear which text is referred to as “Instructions” (*jue*); this gloss is not found either in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* or in the other texts related to it. The text of the “note” (or, possibly, the “commentary,” *zhu*) mentioned in the second sentence—my translation of which is tentative—also does not appear in the other works on the Nine Elixirs.

Make it into pills, and place it again in the earthenware crucible, covering it with the Mysterious and Yellow to a thickness of one inch.

(NOTE: Someone says that the crucible should be closed with another crucible.)

This variant corresponds to the text of the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.11b.

Seal the crucible with the Mud of the Six-and-One, and, as in the initial method, leave it in the sun for ten days so that it becomes completely dry. Then place the crucible over the fire; if it is humid this is not possible, as it would break when you heat it. Heat it again for nine days and nine nights. Then you can extinguish the fire, let the crucible cool for one day, and open it. Brushing with a feather, collect the sublimated essence (*feijing*) that adheres to the upper crucible. If it is of an intense purple color, it is the *Reverted Elixir of the Divine Tally* (*shenfu huandan*).

The “sublimated essence” is the elixir. The *Nine Elixirs* has, in this instance alone, *jingfei*; the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.11b, gives the correct reading.

Add some Grease of Dragons to this elixir, and make it into pills the size of small beans. At the dawn of a *jiazi* day, kneel down and pay obeisance twice, and ingest it. In one hundred days Immortal Men will visit you, and the Jade Women (*yunü*) will appear. Following these divine beings [8b] you will rise and fly. If you want to cross a great river, add Grease of Dragons, or Leftovers of the Count of the River (*hebo yu*), to the *Divine Tally*, and smear it on the soles of your feet. When you walk on the water, you will not sink.

The last two sentences are not found in the *Liquid Pearl*, which has instead: “You will find the Dao and will transcend the generations [of mortals], the hundred diseases will leave your body and you will obtain a life free from death” (1.12a). “Leftovers of the Count of the River” is the same as “Leftover Fishes of the Count of the River,” which according to an earlier passage in this section of the *Nine Elixirs* is a name for carp gall.

If you want to pass through a fire, ingest one pill and you will not burn. Ingesting this Medicine for one hundred days, the Three Corpses (*sanshi*) and the Nine Worms (*jiuchong*) will be destroyed, and you will live a long life free from death.

The Three Corpses and the Nine Worms are frequently mentioned in Daoist texts as representations of the agents that cause death. The last sentence translated above also is not found in the *Liquid Pearl*, which instead explicates the relation between mercury, worms, and carp gall, saying: “Worms and the fish gall are Essences of Yin, and mercury is the Essence of Yang. Therefore Yin can control (*zhi*) Yang, and thus the Medicine becomes fixed (*fu*) and does not dare to escape. The Perfected, the Divine Men, and the immortals keep this method secret, and it cannot be transmitted” (1.12a).

#### [THIRD ELIXIR: DIVINE ELIXIR]

The Third Divine Elixir is called *Divine Elixir* (*shendan*). First lute a double red earthenware crucible with the Mud of the Six-and-One, making it three-tenths of an inch thick both inside and outside. Then take oyster shells, red clay, and magnetite (*cishi*).

(NOTE: According to the rule, magnetite should not be used, but I follow the text without altering it.)

The editor's note is likely to allude to the ingredients of the mud used for making the Sixth and the Ninth Elixirs, which are only oyster shells and red clay.

Pound together equal parts of these three substances ten thousand times, until they become powder-like. Add them to a hundred-day Flowery Pond and make the compound moist.

(NOTE: Someone says to coat the inner part of the crucible with this compound, smear the crucible with it both inside and outside,<sup>5</sup> and then place some Flower of Mysterious and Yellow over the coating, to a thickness of about one inch.)

The directions given in the note correspond in part to those found in the *Liquid Pearl*, I.13b. "Flower of Mysterious and Yellow" is the same as "Mysterious and Yellow"; see p. 185 below.

Then take two pounds of Imperial Man (*dinan*)

(NOTE: That is, realgar, *xionghuang*.)

and one pound of Imperial Woman (*dinü*).

(NOTE: That is, orpiment, *cihuang*.)

[9a] First slightly moisten the mixture in a hundred-day Flowery Pond, so that it would not dare to volatilize when it is placed in the crucible. Then pound it ten thousand times in an iron mortar, until it becomes powder-like. Place it in the crucible, and cover it with Yellow Powder (*huangfen*) to a thickness of about one inch. Close the crucible with another crucible, and seal it with the Mud of the Six-and-One so that there are no leaks of pneuma. Let it dry for ten days.

The Yellow Powder is a powder of Mysterious and Yellow; see *Liquid Pearl*, I.13a.

Heat the crucible over a fire of horse manure or chaff for nine days and nine nights, keeping the crucible five inches above the fire. Then increase the fire so that it comes near the crucible for nine more days and nights. Then intensify the fire so that it reaches the crucible for nine more days and nights. Finally, make it so strong as to cover the lower crucible, for nine more days and nights. After thirty-six days altogether, extinguish the fire and let the crucible cool for one day. Brush it with a feather to collect the sublimated essence that adheres to the upper crucible. Add to it some Grease of Dragons, and place it again in the crucible.

Commenting on a line of the “Songs” on the Nine Elixirs, the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.13b, says here: “If in compounding the Divine Medicines of the Nine Elixirs the sublimated essence does not obtain the Grease of Dragons, the Medicines will lack divine properties.”

Seal it again with the Mud, let it dry, and heat it for thirty-six more days.

(NOTE: Someone says for twenty-seven days.)

The variant corresponds to the reading of the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.13a.

Extinguish the fire, let the crucible cool for one day, and open it. Brush it with a feather to collect the product. This is the sublimated essence. [9b] When it is made into a powder, it has the name of *Divine Elixir*.

A superior man will become a divine immortal after he ingests a speck of this elixir per day for fifty days. An ordinary man and a dull man will become divine immortals after they ingest it for one hundred days and for one year, respectively.

The *Liquid Pearl*, 1.13b, adds: “It is not gods or demons, but the Medicine that makes this possible.”

Men, women, children, servants, and the six domestic animals will also become immortal and free from death if this elixir is given to them to ingest. If you want to keep away the five sorts of weapons (*wubing*), you should carry it at your belt. Divine beings will offer their protection and keep the weapons away. After you ingest this elixir for one hundred days, the divine immortals will give you their welcome. Jade Men (*yunan*), Jade Women (*yuniü*), Jade Lads (*yutong*), the Ministers of the Mountains (*shanqing*), and the Officers of the Moorlands (*zeweï*) will become your attendants, appearing in human form.

Transcending the generations [of mortals] is not inherited,  
Everything is in one’s own hands.

[FOURTH ELIXIR: REVERTED ELIXIR]

The Fourth Divine Elixir is called *Reverted Elixir* (*huandan*). Take alum, arsenolite, red hematite (*daizhe*), Turkestan salt, oyster shells, red clay, excreta of Dragons of Earth (*tulong shi*, worms), mica (*yunmu*), and talc.

For Dragons of Earth as a secret name of worms see *Shiyao erya*, 1.4a.

Heat these nine substances together for one day and one night, making the fire intense. Pound them together until they become powder-like. Add

them [10a] to vinegar (*zuowei*) making them like mud, and coat a crucible with it.

According to the “Secret Instructions,” 20.14b, this mud should be placed inside the crucible and covered with Mysterious and Yellow. Above the Mysterious and Yellow one adds mercury and the other seven ingredients of this elixir.

Place one pound of mercury in the crucible, then add, in this order: Imperial Man (realgar), laminar malachite (*cengqing*), alum, Fat of the Pavilions (*tingzhi*, sulphur), lake salt, Leftovers of the Food of Yu the Great One (*Taiyi Yuyuliang*, hematite), and arsenolite.<sup>6</sup> Arsenolite is therefore on the top, while quicksilver is on its own beneath.

Fat of the Pavilions and Leftovers of the Food of Yu the Great One are common synonyms of sulphur and hematite, respectively.

You should pound these seven substances in separate vessels until they become powder-like. Then, with the pound of quicksilver on its own beneath, place them one on top of one other in the crucible. Close the crucible with another, lute it hermetically with Mud of the Six-and-One added to vinegar, and let it dry for ten days.

Place the crucible on a three-legged iron stand, so that it is nine inches over the ground. Heat it over a fire of horse manure or chaff, which should be kept five inches from the bottom of the crucible. Keep the fire low<sup>7</sup> for nine days and nine nights, then increase it<sup>8</sup> so that it reaches the lower crucible, for nine more days and nights. Constantly keep a damp cloth on the crucible, so that the Medicine does not volatilize, and check the cloth, dampening it again when it becomes dry. After eighty-one days altogether you can extinguish the fire.

The reading “eighty-one days” appears to be correct even though one would expect “eighteen days.” This is suggested by the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.15b, which has “nine times nine, that is, eighty-one days,” and specifies “as in the method for compounding the *Flower of Cinnabar*.” Here too, the text describes only one part of the heating process. If, on the contrary, “eighteen days” is correct, the method described here would be similar to the one for compounding the Second Elixir, in which heating takes place in nine cycles of one day each, turning the crucible upside down at the end of each cycle and repeating the whole process twice.

Let the crucible cool for one day and open it. [10b] The Medicine will have entirely sublimated, and will adhere to the upper crucible. The crucible will

emit [vapors of] the five colors. The method of sublimation is always the foundation for compounding the Medicines.

Brush the crucible with a chicken's feather to collect the elixir, and add to it the Flower of Hundred Plants (*baicao hua*).

Flower of Hundred Plants is a synonym of honey; compare Flowery Nectar of Hundred Plants (*baihui huali*) in the *Shiyao erya*, 1.5a.

Ingest it with pure water from a well. In one hundred days, vermilion birds and male and female phoenixes will circle above you, and Divine Men and Jade Women will appear. In two hundred days you will rise to heaven and enter the earth, and the immortals will become your attendants. In one year the Great One (Taiyi) will welcome you in a chariot of clouds pulled by dragons and horses.

After "ingest it," the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.15b, adds "lying inside a cave."

When a man ingests this elixir, he will never be hungry or thirsty. Even if he is one hundred years old, he will drink only water from a spring and will feed himself only on two dozen dates and chestnuts, or on a five-inch piece of dried meat of ox or mutton. Moreover, if you smear coins with the *Reverted Elixir* and use them to buy something, all those coins will return to you on that very day.

This property of the Reverted Elixir is associated with the word *huan* (to revert, to return) that forms its name.

And if you smear the eyes of a person or the walls of a city with the *Reverted Elixir*, the hundred demons (*baigui*) will flee.

One speck of this Medicine and one pound of powdered quicksilver will immediately form gold when they are heated.

(NOTE: According to another method, if you add Grease of Dragons to this Medicine, and heat it for nine days and nine nights, it will form real gold.)

The method referred to by the editor of the *Nine Elixirs* is described in the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.16a.

[FIFTH ELIXIR: ELIXIR IN PELLETS]

[11a] The Fifth Divine Elixir is called *Elixir in Pellets* (*erdan*). Take one pound of mercury, and put it in a crucible of the Six-and-One (*liuyi fu*).

According to the "Secret Instructions," 20.14b, the inner part of the crucible must first be luted with a mud of Mysterious and Yellow.



Then take one pound of Imperial Man (realgar), pound it until it becomes powder-like, and cover the mercury with it. Then take one pound of Left-overs of the Food of Yu (*Yu yuliang*, hematite), pound it until it becomes powder-like, and cover the Imperial Man with it. Close the crucible with another crucible of the Six-and-One, seal the joints luting them with the Mud of the Six-and-One, and let it dry.

Place the crucible over a fire of horse manure or chaff for nine days and nine nights. Extinguish the fire, and place the crucible over a fire of charcoal for nine days and nine nights. Extinguish the fire, let the crucible cool for one day and open it. The Medicine will have entirely sublimated, and will adhere to the upper crucible. It will be similar to frost and snow. Brushing with a feather, collect it, and add to it equal quantities of Grease of Dragons, and of Celestial Male (*tianxiong*) from Mount Shaoshi (Shaoshi shan).

“Celestial Male” is a secret name of aconite. Mount Shaoshi is in present-day Henan province.

After ingesting a speck of this elixir for thirty days, a chick will grow wings and become a flying immortal.

(NOTE: Someone says “blood of a chick.”)

The editor’s note seems to imply that, according to a version of the *Nine Elixirs* available to him, the elixir should be ingested with the blood of a chick. Instead, the *Liquid Pearl*, 2.1b, has “divine chick” for “chick,” and renders this sentence as follows: “By ingesting a speck [of this elixir], a divine chick will immediately fly ten thousand miles away as an immortal, passing over rivers and seas. By ingesting it for thirty days, it will be able to fly.” The growth of wings is a metaphor for the achievement of immortality.

The ten thousand gods will become your attendants and offer protection, and the Jade Women will be at your service. The divine immortals will welcome you, and you will rise to heaven. The hundred demons, the Gods of Soil and Grain (Sheji), the Count of the Wind (Fengbo), and the Master of Rain (Yushi) will welcome you, and you will have them at your service.

[SIXTH ELIXIR: REFINED ELIXIR]

[11b] The Sixth Elixir is called *Refined Elixir (liandan)*. Eight minerals are necessary to compound it. Take cinnabar from Ba or Yue, Imperial Man (realgar), and Imperial Woman (orpiment), and sublimate them; also take laminar malachite, alum, arsenolite, chalcantite (*shidan*), and magnetite.

In the list of ingredients given in the *Liquid Pearl*, 2.2a, cinnabar from Ba and cinnabar from Yue (present-day Sichuan and Zhejiang, respectively) are considered as two different substances, and arsenolite is not mentioned.

Pound separately equal parts of these eight substances in the desired amount until they become powder-like, and add to them some Grease of Dragons of Earth. Then take two pints of excreta of Dragons of Earth, compound them with gall of a yellow dog<sup>9</sup> and make the crucible [with this mixture]. Pound three pounds each of oyster shells and red clay until they become powder-like, and add them to vinegar making a mud. Smear the crucible with it, making it three-tenths of an inch thick both inside and outside, and let it dry.

(NOTE: According to another method, take the eight ingredients in the desired amount, and [add to them] some Grease of Dragons of Earth.<sup>10</sup> Add one pint of excreta of Dragons of Earth to gall of a yellow dog [and make the crucible].<sup>11</sup> Pound together two pints of excreta of Dragons of Earth, oyster shells, and red clay until they become powder-like, and make a mud. Smear the crucible, making it three-tenths of an inch thick both inside and outside, and let it dry.)

The variant method described by the editor of the *Nine Elixirs* corresponds to the one found in the *Liquid Pearl*, 2.2a.

Having separately pounded the eight minerals until they have become powder-like, place the cinnabar at the bottom, then the Imperial Man, [12a] the Imperial Woman, the laminar malachite, the alum, the arsenolite, the chalcantite, and the magnetite.

According to the “Secret Instructions,” 20.15a, a half-inch layer of Mysterious and Yellow is also placed at the bottom of the crucible.

The magnetite is on its own on the top. Close the crucible with another crucible of the Six-and-One. Lute the joints with the Mud of the Six-and-One, and let the crucible dry as in the previous methods.

Heat it for thirty-six days over a fire of horse manure or chaff.

The *Liquid Pearl*, 2.2a and 2.3a, has “thirty days” (*sanxun*).

Extinguish the fire, let the crucible cool for one day and open it. The Medicine will have entirely sublimated and will adhere to the upper crucible. It will be like frost and snow. Brush it with a feather to collect it, and add to it some Grease of Dragons, making pills the size of small beans.

Ingesting one pill a day of this elixir after your meal, you will become an

immortal in ten days. Gods and demons will become your attendants and offer protection, and you will have them at your service. You can also prepare gold and ingest it. Not only a man, but also a woman will become a flying immortal. If you want to abstain from cereals, and cease sexual relations, [you will be able to] just drink water and not have intercourse.

The *Liquid Pearl*, 2.2b, adds: “If you have intercourse with women, the practices will never be accomplished.”

The residue of this elixir can heal the hundred diseases.

According to one method, if you add lead to this elixir it will form gold. And if you add a speck of *Refined Elixir* to one pound of quicksilver, and heat it, gold will also form.

[12b] (NOTE: Someone says that the *Soft Elixir* is similar to the *Refined Elixir* and the *Elixir in Pellets*, as all are soft and easy to ingest.)

The *Soft Elixir* and the *Elixir in Pellets* are the Seventh and the Fifth Elixir, respectively.

[SEVENTH ELIXIR: SOFT ELIXIR]

The Seventh Elixir is called *Soft Elixir (roudan)*. Use three pounds of mercury. Add vinegar to the Mysterious and Yellow, and make them into a mud. Smear with it a crucible, making it three-tenths of an inch thick both inside and outside. Place the mercury in the crucible. Close the crucible with another crucible, smear the joints with the Mud of the Six-and-One, and let it dry for ten days. Then heat it for thirty-six days, as in the method of the great *Flower of Cinnabar*. Extinguish the fire, let the crucible cool for one day and open it. Brush it with a feather to collect what adheres to the upper crucible, and add to it some Grease of Dragons.

Ingesting this elixir three times a day in pills the size of small beans, it will make a man into a divine immortal free from death. Ingesting it with juice of wild raspberries,<sup>12</sup> the white hair of a ninety-year-old man will turn black in twenty days. The elixir will be beneficial for his Yang essence (*jing*) and will strengthen his Yin pneuma (*qi*). Having intercourse with women he will generate a multitude of children.<sup>13</sup> A kola tree drawn with the *Soft Elixir* will transform itself into a man. If servants are marked with this elixir, they will never escape. An eighty-year-old woman who ingests it will bear children, [13a] and an officer who ingests it will be promoted.

The last sentence rests on a pun between *qian* (“to transfer”) and one of the graphs for *xian* (“to rise [as an immortal]”; see the Glossary).

Compounding this elixir with lead and heating it, it will form gold and silver (*yin*).

(NOTE: Someone says gold.)

[EIGHTH ELIXIR: FIXED ELIXIR]

The Eighth Elixir is called *Fixed Elixir* (*fudan*).

The *Liquid Pearl*, 2.3b–4b, gives this method twice, with some diverging details.

Its color is partly black and partly purple, as though it has hues of the five colors. Take one pound or more of mercury. Cover an earthenware crucible with Flower of Mysterious and Yellow (*xuanhuang hua*), making it three-tenths of an inch thick both inside and outside.

The corresponding passages in the *Jiudan jingjue*, 17.3a, and in the “Secret Instructions,” 20.15a, show that Flower of Mysterious and Yellow is a synonym of Mysterious and Yellow. According to the *Jiudan jingjue*, the crucible used for compounding this elixir can also be covered with the Mysterious and White (*xuanbai*), a compound analogous to the Mysterious and Yellow but also containing gold; see above, p. 103.

Then pound laminar malachite and magnetite until they become powder-like. Cover with them the Flower of Mysterious and Yellow, and also the laminar malachite and the magnetite. Close the crucible with another, and smear the joints with the Mud of the Six-and-One. Let the crucible dry for ten days.

Heat the crucible for nine days over a fire of horse manure or chaff. Turn it upside down, and heat it again for nine days and nine nights.

“Turn it upside down” is, literally, “turn it making the upper (half of the) crucible into the lower (half).” See above, p. 171.

Then turn it upside down again, and heat it for nine more days and nine more nights. Do this nine times altogether. Extinguish the fire, let the crucible cool for one day and open it. Brush it with a feather to collect what has sublimated and adheres to the upper crucible, and add to it some Grease of Dragons. Place it again in the crucible and heat it [13b] for ten more days. Extinguish the fire, let the crucible cool for one day, and open it. Brush it

with a feather to collect what has sublimated and adheres to the upper crucible. Pound it until it becomes powder-like, and store it in a cylinder made of gold or silver, or of fresh bamboo.

At dawn, kneel down and pay obeisance twice facing the sun. Ingest a speck with pure water from a well, and you will become a divine immortal. If you walk keeping in your hand one pill of this elixir of the size of a date pit, the hundred demons will be exterminated. Marking the doors with the *Fixed Elixir*,<sup>14</sup> the hundred calamities (*baixie*), the myriad sprites (*zhongjing*), and the *chimei* and *wangliang* demons will dare not come before you. This elixir will also keep off thieves and robbers, and even tigers and wolves will run away. If a woman who lives alone keeps one pill the size of a large bean in her hand, the hundred demons, thieves, and robbers will flee and dare not come near her.

On the *chimei* and *wangliang* demons see note 12 to Chapter 7.

[NINTH ELIXIR: COLD ELIXIR]

The Ninth Elixir is called *Cold Elixir* (*handan*). Regularly use a red earthenware crucible. As in the method for compounding the *Flower of Cinnabar*, lute it with the Mud of the Six-and-One. Make the crucible three-tenths of an inch thick both inside and outside, and let it dry. Take one pound each of Imperial Man (realgar), Imperial Woman (orpiment), laminar malachite, arsenolite, and magnetite, and pound them separately until they become powder-like. [14a] As in the method of the *Flower of Cinnabar*, first coat the crucible of the Six-and-One with the Mysterious and Yellow. Then place in it one pound of Liquid Pearl, and cover it with the Imperial Man, the Imperial Woman, the laminar malachite, the arsenolite, and the magnetite.

The *Liquid Pearl*, 2.4b, has “quicksilver” for “Liquid Pearl,” but the substance meant here should be the Liquid Pearl obtained from the Mysterious and Yellow (see above, pp. 171–72). As we have seen, the Mysterious and Yellow is often placed at the bottom of the crucible in the methods of the Nine Elixirs.

The magnetite is therefore on the top. Close the crucible with another, and smear the joints with the Mud of the Six-and-One to a thickness of three-tenths of an inch. Then make a mud with half pound each of excreta of Dragons of Earth and yellow soil (*huangtu*). Smear the crucible to a thickness of three-tenths of an inch.

(NOTE: Someone says to smear the crucible [first] with oyster shells and red clay to a thickness of three-tenths of an inch; then use the excreta of Dragons of Earth.)

The variant reported in the note corresponds to the method in the *Liquid Pearl*, 2.5a.

Let the crucible dry in the sun for ten days.

Heat the crucible over a tenuous fire, first keeping the heat gentle but then making it fierce, for nine days and nine nights. Let the crucible cool for one day and open it. Brush it with a feather to collect what adheres to the upper crucible, and add to it some Grease of Dragons and gall of a yellow dog. Make it into pills about the size of small beans.

The elixir is “entirely similar to stalactites,” says the *Liquid Pearl*, 2.5a.

At dawn pay obeisance twice toward the sun, and ingest one pill with pure water from a well. It will make your body light, and in one hundred days the hundred diseases will be healed. The Jade Women will become your attendants. The Director of Destinies (Siming) will delete your name from the records of the dead (*siji*) and enter it in the registers of immortality (*xianlu*).

The Director of Destinies is the deity charged with establishing the length of each person’s life on behalf of the Great One (Taiyi). He performs his task by entering the individual’s name in the “records of the dead” or the “registers of immortality.”

You will travel through the air in any direction, and enter and exit the world without interruption. Nobody will be able to hold or restrain you: one moment you will be sitting, and then you will rise up and disappear. Lightly you will ascend riding the clouds, and rise to heaven.

SCRIPTURE OF  
THE GOLDEN LIQUOR

The text translated below is found in the first chapter of the *Baopu zi shenxian jinzhuo jing* (Scripture of the Golden Liquid of the Divine Immortals, by the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature; CT 917). The commentary is not translated. References to page numbers in the *Daozang* text are given in brackets within the translation. I divide the text into five parts, corresponding to the summary of the methods and the comparison with the synopsis in Ge Hong's *Inner Chapters* found above, pp. 114–18. My comments are printed in smaller type (comments found in the translation of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* are not duplicated here).

[1a] It was by ingesting the Reverted Elixir of the Golden Liquid that the Great One (Taiyi) became a divine immortal, and rose to heaven in broad daylight. Those who search for immortality and do not obtain this Way merely bring suffering upon themselves. Its method is described below.

METHOD OF THE GOLDEN LIQUOR

[Use] twelve ounces of gold (*huangjin*) of superior quality, and twelve ounces of quicksilver (*shuiyin*). Take the gold, grind it to powder, and cast it into the quicksilver so that they combine with each other. Wash them in pure wa-

ter more than ten times, [1b] adding thereafter two ounces each of realgar (*xionghuang*) and saltpeter (*xiaoshi*).

For the solution of realgar, the commentary refers to the *Sanshiliu shuifa* (Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions). Two methods appear in the received version (CT 930) of this work, 1b–2a (trl. Ts'ao, Ho, and Needham, "An Early Mediaeval Chinese Alchemical Text on Aqueous Solutions," 125–26). Both are quoted in the *Jiudan jingjue* (= *Huangdi jiating shendan jingjue*; CT 885), 8.4a. The commentary also gives instructions for testing the quality of saltpeter; a method for this is found in the *Jiudan jingjue*, 8.12a (duplicated in 16.8a; trans. Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.IV: 186–87).

[Put the amalgam in a bamboo cylinder, and] [2a] varnish with lacquer the tablets that close its two openings. Tighten the tablets with silk, so that they perfectly fit the cylinder. Put the cylinder in vinegar (*zuowei*) for one hundred days, not a single day less. After the required amount of time, the Medicine will form. If the number of days is not sufficient, the Medicine cannot transmute itself; in that case, leave the cylinder [in vinegar] again as before and let the Medicine form. The cylinder should not be turned upside down. [2b] After one hundred days, the entire content will transmute itself into the [Gold] Water.

The Gold Water is the Golden Liquor.

#### METHOD OF THE REVERTED ELIXIR

Boil two pounds of quicksilver in this Gold Water (*jinshui*), and quickly pour some pure vinegar (*chun kujiu*) onto it. The vinegar will stay apart from the quicksilver without mixing with it. [3a] Calcine (*duan*) them over an intense fire for thirty days, until the quicksilver takes on a purple color. Fill with it a yellow earthenware bowl (*huangtu ou*), [and lute it] [3b] with the Mud of the Six-and-One.

The commentary explains that the yellow earthenware bowl is a normal earthenware crucible (*tufu*).

*Method for making the Mud of the Six-and-One.* Take alum (*fanshi*), Turkestan salt (*rongyan*), lake salt (*luxian*), and arsenolite (*yushi*), and first heat these four substances for twenty days; [also] take left-oriented oyster shells (*zuogu muli*) from Donghai and red clay (*chishi zhi*). Take the desired amount of these substances in equal parts, and pound them together ten



thousand times. Sift them through thin silk, and add them to hundred-day vinegar, making them like mud.

Donghai is in present-day Shandong. This passage is an almost verbatim quotation of the method for making the Mud of the Six-and-One in the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*; see the translation above, p. 166. The omission of the seventh ingredient, talc (*huashi*), may be due to a copying error.

You can use [this mud] to lute the inner part of the yellow earthenware bowl for a thickness of three-tenths of an inch, or up to half an inch. Leave the bowl under the sun, and use it when it is perfectly dry. [4a] From dawn to sunset its entire contents will transmute themselves into an elixir, called Reverted Elixir (*huandan*). Take a speck of it with a spatula, and it will form the Yellow and White (*huangbai*).

As it is said in the commentary, the Yellow is gold, and the White is silver; one should always prepare gold and silver as a test before ingesting this elixir (the corresponding passage in the *Inner Chapters* mentions only silver). For this transmutation the commentary says that one should follow the same method used for the first of the Nine Elixirs; see the translation above, p. 170.

[3b] The Reverted Elixir obtained by calcination in the yellow earthenware bowl can be ingested. Swallow it in pills the size of a small bean, and you will rise to heaven in broad daylight. Divine beings (*shenming*) will welcome you, and dragons and tigers will plea for your assistance.

According to the commentary, an adept who ingests this elixir enjoys a status higher than that of the deities of the mountains, the rivers, and the soil. These deities are flanked by an azure dragon on their left and a white tiger on their right; hence the image given in the text. The commentary also states that for ingesting this elixir it is not necessary to observe any taboo concerning time.

[5b] The Gold Water and the Mercury Water (*hongshui*) should be used entirely. Nothing should be wasted. Merely pour more vinegar onto them, and you will be able to use these two Waters to boil ten thousand pounds [of quicksilver].

To explain the apparent contradiction between this sentence (“use the two Waters to boil ten thousand pounds [of quicksilver]”) and the sentence found at the beginning of the present section (“boil two pounds of

quicksilver in this Gold Water”), the commentary suggests that the Mercury Water is only used for testing the quality of the Reverted Elixir before it is ingested.

The method of the Divine Elixir is thus completed.

#### USES OF THE REVERTED ELIXIR

[6a] Take one pound of this elixir, and place it over an intense fire. Fan vigorously, and the Divine Elixir will melt and form a gold; [6b] this will have a vivid scarlet color and is called Elixir-Gold (or: Cinnabar Gold, *danjin*). If you smear the blade of a sword with it, that sword will keep the other weapons ten thousand miles away.

If you cast plates and bowls with the Elixir-Gold, and take food and drinks from them, you will live a long life free from death, and will be coeternal with Heaven and Earth. [7a] By collecting [the essences of] the Sun and the Moon with these plates, you obtain a Nectar of Divine Radiance (*shengguang li*). Men and women should take their food from different vessels, and they will immediately rise to heaven.

According to the commentary, these vessels are similar to the *fangzhu* mirrors that absorb the essences of the Sun. See above, p. 117.

#### PROPERTIES OF THE GOLDEN LIQUOR

Moreover, if you take one ounce each of Gold Water and Mercury Water, [7b] and drink them facing the sun, you immediately will become a Golden Man (*jinren*). Your body will be radiant and will grow feathers and wings. On high you will put in motion the Original Essence (*yuanjing*) on behalf of [the god of] the Central Yellow (Zhonghuang) and of the Great One (Taiyi). [8a] If you drink half an ounce each of Gold Water [and Mercury Water], you will live a long life without end.

The commentary explains that one becomes a “celestial spirit” (*tianshen*) and helps the Central Yellow and the Great One smoothly to regulate the celestial pneuma (*tianqi*) according to the sequence of the four seasons. On these two gods see above, p. 13, and note 36 to the Introduction. The commentary also remarks that “half an ounce of the ancient times corresponds nowadays to one ounce.” In the last sentence, the adverb *ge* (“each”) suggests that one should restore the word *jinshui*, “Mercury Water.”

## METHOD OF THE ELIXIR FOR THE NOMINATION TO IMMORTAL

Moreover, if you add yellow clay to the Gold Water and the Mercury [Water], and calcine them over an intense fire for one day, they will entirely transmute themselves into gold. If you heat them for two days, they will transmute themselves into an elixir, [8b] called Elixir for the Nomination to Immortal (*bixian dan*). If you ingest this elixir in pills the size of a small bean, you will be able to enter a famous mountain or a great river, and become an immortal.

## SCRIPTURE OF THE REVERTED ELIXIR IN NINE CYCLES

The text translated below is found in the *Taiji zhenren jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue* (Essential Instructions on the Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles of the Perfected of the Great Ultimate; CT 889), 1a–5b. References to page numbers in the *Daozang* text are given in brackets within the translation. I divide the text into seven parts, corresponding to the summary of the methods found above, pp. 118–19. My comments are printed in smaller type (comments found in the translation of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* are not duplicated here).

[1a] Lord Wang of the Western Citadel (Xicheng Wangjun) said:

As remarked above, pp. 57–58, the mention of this deity here and in the last section of the text is the only detail that displays its affiliation to the Shangqing corpus.

### PREPARATION OF THE CRUCIBLE

If you want to compound the [Reverted Elixir in] Nine Cycles, first make a Divine Crucible (*shenfu*) holding three and a half pecks. Use earthenware crucibles from Xingyang, Changsha, or Yuzhang, four-tenths of an inch

thick. Take equal quantities of left-oriented oyster shells (*zuogu muli*) from Donghai, white clay (*baishi zhi*), powdered mica (*yunmu*), earthworm excreta (*yinlou fen*), talc (*huashi*), and white alum (*bai fanshi*). Pound each of these six ingredients twenty thousand times. Mix them, and after this is done pound them again thirty thousand times. Then sieve them through a piece of fine silk.

Xingyang, Changsha, and Yuzhang are in present-day Henan, Hunan, and Jiangxi, respectively. Xingyang is also mentioned as a place of production of crucibles in the “Explanations” found in the *Scripture of the Liquid Pearl*, 1.4b. Donghai is in present-day Shandong.

When this is completed, mix the six ingredients with hundred-day vinegar (*kujiu*), making them like mud. Pound this mud again ten thousand times. When this is completed, lute with it a double earthenware crucible (*shangxia tufu*) both inside and outside, for a thickness of three-tenths of an inch. Let the crucible dry in the shade in a room.

A “double earthenware crucible” is made of two superimposed crucibles joined by their mouths.

When this is completed, lute it again under a tenuous sunshine for a thickness of three-tenths of an inch, and let it dry for ten days as before. Apply the mud altogether three times, so that the inner and the outer parts are one and three-tenths inches thick. Always examine the mud while it is drying.

Take [1b] some Lead Elixir (*qiandan*), and mix it to vinegar forming a mud.

*Qiandan* is also the common name of minium. Here, however, this term denotes a substance similar in properties and function to the Mysterious and Yellow of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*.

Pound it thirty thousand times. When this is completed, lute with it the inner parts of the double earthenware crucible for a thickness of three-tenths of an inch, and let it dry again in the shade for five days and five nights. Add two-tenths of an inch of mud, and let it dry [once more] in the shade. Do not let there be a crack even as minute as a hair, or the crucible could not be used. For this purpose, make a brush with mutton hair, and spread evenly the mud with it so that the crucible is perfectly tight.

The preparation of the Divine Crucible for the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles is completed.

PREPARATION OF THE STOVE

Afterward, you should dwell in a famous mountain, in a place where there are no traces of other people. Build the Chamber of the Divine Stove (*shenzao wu*) near an east-flowing stream. The Chamber should be forty feet long, twenty feet wide, and its foundation should be four feet from the ground. First dig the earth for a few feet; if you do not find an old well or a tomb, you can raise the foundation there. The Chamber should have three doors, facing south, east, and west. Place the stove in the center, with the mouth facing west. Arrange an iron stand inside the stove and set the crucible on it, [2a] so that it is nine inches from the walls of the stove. Cover the stove with bricks plastered with fine clay. Do not let there be any crack.

The method of the Divine Stove is completed.

On the methods for building the alchemical laboratory see above, Chapter 5.

INGREDIENTS AND CLOSING OF THE CRUCIBLE

*Rules on the use of the ingredients.*

Alum (*fanshi*), one pound.

Nodular malachite (*kongqing*), three pounds. If you have the laminar variety (*cengqing*), then use laminar malachite.

Quartz (*baishi ying*), two pounds.

Cinnabar (*dansha*), ten pounds. Use the lustrous (*guangming*) variety that does not tinge the paper. Cinnabar from Chenzhou or Jinzhou is superior.

Realgar (*xionghuang*), four pounds. The luminous red realgar that does not tinge the paper is the best.

Orpiment (*cihuang*), five pounds.

Mercury (*shuiyin*), six pounds.

Chenzhou and Jinzhou are in present-day Hunan. The mention of Jinzhou, a prefecture established in 686, shows that the present version of the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* was re-edited after the late seventh century.

Of these seven ingredients, mercury alone should not be pounded. Each of the other six ingredients must be pounded thirty thousand times. When this is completed, first place the alum at the bottom of the crucible, then add nodular malachite, quartz, cinnabar, realgar, and orpiment. Orpiment therefore

is on its own on top of the other ingredients. Spread [the ingredients] evenly, then pour the six pounds of mercury over the orpiment.

After this is done, [2b] cover the crucible with another Divine Crucible, first luting the mouth of the lower crucible with the mud of Lead Elixir, and then placing the upper crucible over it. Lute the joints with the mud, so that the two crucibles perfectly fit together. Then lute the outer part of the joints with the mud of Lead Elixir, for a thickness of about one and two-tenths inches.

This is the method to follow if you use an earthenware crucible. If you use a porcelain or a metallic crucible, lute it as necessary instead of one and two-tenths inches.

The mud should be applied on the crucible altogether three times. Each time, you must lute the joints and let the crucible dry, repeating this until the lute reaches a thickness of one and two-tenths inches. Then cover the mud of Lead Elixir with the Mud of the Six-and-One, for a thickness of one and two-tenths inches. Follow the same method used for the mud of Lead Elixir, letting it dry and gradually adding more mud. When it reaches a thickness of altogether two and four-tenths inches, [the luting] is completed.

#### HEATING AND INGESTION OF THE ELIXIR

Afterward, arrange the crucible over the iron stand. The stand [3a] has four legs; it is similar to a plate for cooking cakes, but should be nine inches high. First light a fire of chaff under the stand so that it is at up to six inches from the base of the crucible, for nine days and nine nights. Then increase the fire so that it is at three inches from the base of the crucible, for nine days and nine nights. Then increase it again so that it covers the base of the crucible for three inches, for nine days and nine nights. Then increase it again so that it covers the belly of the crucible for three inches, for nine days and nine nights. Then increase it again so that it covers the belly of the crucible for two more inches—making five inches altogether—for nine days and nine nights. Then increase it again so that it is at one inch under the seal of the crucible, for nine days and nine nights. Extinguish the fire and let the crucible cool for ten days. Then increase the fire again so that it is at half an inch from the joints [of the lower and the upper parts of the crucible], for thirty-six days from dawn to night. This makes altogether ninety days and ninety nights [of heating]. You will obtain the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles.

At the end of the required number of days, let the crucible cool for seven

days. Take the crucible out of the stove, and disjoin the upper half. The sublimated essence (*feijing*) will have nine colors. It will be glossy, brilliant, and glistening, adhering to the upper crucible. Brush it off with a feather of a three-year-old chicken, and store it [3b] in a tight container to be carried with you.

“Sublimated essence” is the same term often used to denote the elixir in the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*.

Two ounces form one dose. Ingest it at dawn with freshly drawn clear water, facing the sun. You will be able to dissolve your form becoming invisible (*yinlun sanxing*) and to fly soaring to the Great Void (*taixu*). An envoy of the Great Ultimate (*taiji*) will welcome you with the Golden Elixir (*jindan*) and the Winged-Wheel [Chariot] (*yulun*). You will multiply your form and transform your shadow (*fenxing huaying*), making them into thousands of white cranes. You will rise to [the heaven] of Great Tenuity (Taiwei) and will receive the rank of a Perfected Immortal (*zhenxian*). Your longevity will equal that of the Three Luminaries (*sanguang*); you will revert to youth and move away from old age. Your complexion will shine like jade, and in one instant you will obtain a radiant spiritual force (*yaoling*). Such indeed is the power of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles.

The Three Luminaries are the Sun, the Moon, and the five planets; or the Sun, the Moon, and the Northern Dipper. On the Winged-Wheel Chariot (*yulun zhi che*) see *Wushang biyao* (The Supreme Secret Essentials; CT 1138), 19.8a. The *Wushang biyao* locates the Great Tenuity between the heavens of Great Clarity (Taiqing) and Highest Clarity (Shangqing); see above, p. 48.

#### OTHER USES OF THE ELIXIR

Take ten pounds of lead and place it in an iron vessel. Heat it on an intense fire and bring it to a boil. Pour one scruple of Flower of the Nine Cycles (*jiuzhuan zhi hua*) onto the liquid lead and stir. In one instant it will form nine pounds of gold.

The Flower of the Nine Cycles is the elixir obtained from the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles, i.e., the previous method.

Take one pound of quicksilver and seven pounds of tin, and place them in a pot (*guo*). Heat them, and bring them to a boil three times. Pour one scruple of Flower of the Nine Cycles onto the liquid tin, and stir. In one instant



it will become silver. [4a] If the elixir can produce these transmutations, its compounding has been successful. If the test fails, repeat the heating according to the previous method for ninety days and ninety nights, and you will not fail in obtaining the elixir.

“Tin” (*xi*) is a frequent synonym of lead in *waidan* texts. The passage translated above is quoted as Method for Testing the Medicines (“Shiyao fa”) in the *Jiudan jingjue* (= *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue*; CT 885), 20.16b–17a.

Take the residue of the elixir from the crucible, mix it, and pound it fifty thousand times. Add some sugar or honey to it, and make it into pills the size of kola nuts. These are the Divine Pills of the Great Ultimate for Reverting to Life (*Taiji huanming shenwan*). If you place two of these pills in the mouth of those who have died no more than three days earlier, and make them ingest those pills with freshly drawn water, they will come back to life. If the Divine Pills are given to those who suffer loss or injury, or who have become blind or deaf, they will revert to their previous condition. If you have an internal ailment, ingest a couple of pills; if the ailment is an outer one, pulverize two pills and apply the powder by rubbing. You will heal in a short time. One can easily heal any illness in this way. If you ingest one pill at dawn, your longevity will equal that of Heaven and Earth.

*Dan* “at dawn” is likely to be a mistake for *ri* “a day.”

If you smear an object with the Divine Pills, it will come back to you by itself upon leaving your hands.

Compare this passage of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*: “If you smear coins with the *Reverted Elixir* and use them to buy something, all those coins will return to you on that very day” (see above, p. 181).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY DETAILS ON THE CRUCIBLE AND THE HEATING

Be careful not to break the old crucible, so that you can use it for compounding another elixir with the same luting. [4b] You will only have to seal the mouths of the upper and lower halves again. Do not let the crucible become dirty, and do not handle it carelessly. When you are ready to use it again, lute again the inner and the outer parts with the mud of Lead Elixir, for the same thickness indicated before.

If the fire is inadequate, and at the end of the required number of days the Flower of the Elixir (*danhua*) has not yet sublimated, this is because the heat-

ing was insufficient. Seal the joints of the two crucibles once more according to the [previous] method, and heat them again for thirty-six days. You will not fail to obtain the Elixir, and it will not be necessary to wait for ninety days and ninety nights.

RITUAL RULES

Before [you compound the elixir], you should perform the purification practices (*qingzhai*) for one hundred days. After that, you may lute and prepare the Divine Crucible, and then pound the ingredients. You should time the whole process so that the fire can be started at the dawn of the ninth day of the ninth month.

From the day on which you undertake the purification practices, you should discontinue common human activities, so that you may devote yourself entirely to making the elixir. The compounding can be performed by three persons who share the same heart and love the Dao, are devout and trustworthy, are not vulgar or lewd, and are firm in their intentions. If it is difficult to find three such persons, two may be enough. They should all undertake the purification practices, observe the precepts, and perform the ablutions. They should not approach sickness and filth or see corpses. Domestic animals also must be carefully avoided.

Similar passages are found in the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* (see above, pp. 161–62 and 163), and in the *Langgan huadan shangjing* (= *Taiwei lingshu ziwen langgan huadan shenzhen shangjing*; CT 255), 3a and 4a (trl. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 334 and 335).

[5a] Considering all this, is it not truly difficult to devote oneself to the practices of self-cultivation (*xiuyang*) among the common people?

This method of the Divine Elixir in Nine Cycles is the oral instructions (*koujue*) of Lord Wang. It is clear and easy to perform. If the ingredients are utterly pure (*jinjing*), and if you duly perform the purification practices, observe the precepts, and cultivate yourself dwelling in deep retirement and attaining to a state of clarity and tranquility (*qingjing*), this divine and wondrous method will never fail.

On the day on which you undertake the purification practices, first toss five bushels of pure liquor (*qingjiu*) into a stream that flows near your dwelling. If there is no stream, you can toss the liquor into a well. This is done to pacify the pneuma of the earth (*diqu*). Regularly drink some of that water during the purification practices.

The passage translated above is also found in *Sanshiliu shuifa* (Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions; CT 930), 11a. On a similar practice performed before compounding the Elixir Flower of Langgan see above, p. 83.

To receive this divine scripture and the instructions on the elixir, make a bond (*yue*) [with your master] and undertake the purification practices. Sanction the covenant with an oath, using a golden figurine of a fish weighing eight ounces and a dragon-shaped jade ring. These replace the oath made by having your hair cut and smearing your mouth with blood. But these sacred arts (*lingshu*) cannot be kept forever secret. Therefore, if you are unable to find those objects, you may replace the token (*xin*) of the golden fish with forty feet of fine azure hemp fabric, and the bond of the dragon-shaped jade ring with forty feet of heavy silk. Give both of them as offerings.

The master who has the scriptures should make arrangements in order to distribute [the received tokens] [5b] by giving them to those who study in the cold of a mountain hut. He should not bring harm to himself by using them for his own advantage. Thus he demonstrates his own bond with Heaven, and shows that he does not act for personal benefit.

Compare *Wushang biyao* (CT 1138), 34.8a: “The ritual tokens received for transmitting a scripture should be divided into ten parts. Two of them are sent to one’s ancestral master, and two more are distributed as alms to the poor and to the masters of the Dao who live in mountain huts. The remaining tokens should be arranged for ritual use.”

There are laws concerning the disclosure [of this scripture] to the four corners of the world against the covenant of transmission. Keep it secret! Beware!

**Part Five**  
**The Legacy of the Great Clarity**



## THE LATER HISTORY OF CHINESE ALCHEMY AND THE DECLINE OF THE GREAT CLARITY

The Taiqing scriptures are the first ones to be based on the view of the alchemical process described above in Chapter 4. This view is the main legacy that they left to the later traditions in the history of Chinese alchemy; it survived beyond the decline of the Taiqing tradition, and even beyond the demise of *waidan* when *neidan* embraced it and renovated it. This chapter outlines the main changes in the history of Chinese alchemy that resulted in the eventual disappearance of the Taiqing tradition, and in the rise and growth of *neidan*. As we shall see, these two phenomena are closely related to each other, and actually occurred in parallel.

### *Alchemical Images in Meditation Practices*

As we have seen, the attribution of alchemical knowledge to Zhang Daoling, and the inclusion of alchemical texts in the Shangqing corpus, marked the first encounters between *waidan* and established Daoist movements. Around 500 CE, the relation between *waidan* and Daoism was formally reaffirmed when the Taiqing scriptures were classified as one of the Four Supplements to the Three Caverns of the Daoist Canon. By that time, however, events had occurred in Jiangan that led to the decline of the Taiqing tradition during

the Tang period, and eventually to the slow disappearance of *waidan* from the Song period onward. The new models of doctrines and practices that emerged in the late Six Dynasties did not influence *waidan* alone, but also the whole development of alchemy in China, as it was through them that the shift to *neidan* occurred.

Meditation is the discipline that most affected these developments. Both Michel Strickmann and Isabelle Robinet have opened the way to the study of this important juncture in the history of alchemy and Daoism, showing that the Shangqing meditation practices interiorize the alchemical process and thus were crucial for the rise and development of *neidan*.<sup>1</sup> Their work allows us to place in a wider perspective some hints to meditation practices found in Chinese texts earlier than the Shangqing revelations of 364–70.

#### EARLIEST INTIMATIONS

The first known examples of the use of alchemical imagery in relation to meditation practices date from exactly two centuries before the Shangqing revelations. Referring to Laozi as a deity to be visualized within one's inner body, the *Inscription for Laozi* (*Laozi ming*) of 165 CE states that he "goes in and out of the Cinnabar Hut (*danlu*), and rises from and descends into the Yellow Court (*huangting*)."<sup>2</sup> The Cinnabar Hut and the Yellow Court are names of the upper and the lower Cinnabar Field, respectively, but one can hardly read this sentence without also noticing the analogy between the Cinnabar Hut and another *danlu*, the "elixir furnace," or alchemical stove.

Both the *Inscription for Laozi* and another epigraph also dating from 165 CE, the *Stele to Wangzi Qiao* (*Wangzi Qiao bei*), also contain the first mention of a term that later became prominent in inner alchemy, namely *dantian*, or Cinnabar Field. The *Inscription for Laozi* uses this term to mean the lower Cinnabar Field and places it alongside Purple Chamber (*zifang*), a name for the gallbladder. These verses of the *Inscription* also refer to Laozi in his divine aspect:

He regulates the Three Luminaries (*sanguang*),  
and the Four Numina (*siling*) are to his sides;  
he maintains his thoughts on his Cinnabar Field  
and on the Purple Chamber of the Great One (Taiyi).<sup>3</sup>

The *Stele to Wang Ziqiao* tells the story of a local magistrate who had a shrine built in homage to this immortal after unusual events had occurred near his tomb. At that time, says the *Stele*, "some strummed zithers and sang

of the Great One; others practiced meditation by passing through their Cinnabar Fields.”<sup>4</sup>

From the late second century also comes the first mention of the “inner embryo,” one of the most distinctive notions of *neidan*. Somewhat unexpectedly, it is found in the *Xiang'er* commentary to the *Laozi*, written around 200 CE and associated with the Way of the Celestial Masters. The *Xiang'er* criticizes those who meditate believing that one can find the Dao within one’s body, saying:

Those who regularly practice false arts in the mortal world have established glib and deceptive arguments, basing themselves on this perfected text (i.e., the *Laozi*). . . . They say that nurturing the embryo (*peitai*) and refining the physical form (*lianxing*) should be like making clay into pottery.<sup>5</sup> (*Xiang'er*, 14)

Taken together, the two inscriptions and the *Xiang'er* show that alchemical imagery was used in relation to meditation practices by the turn of the third century CE, and that the notion of an “inner embryo” already existed by that time.

#### TRACES IN THE INNER CHAPTERS

The step is not a major one from the notion of an “embryo” dwelling within one’s inner body to the idea of generating an “inner infant,” who is equated with the inner elixir and represents one’s own real self. In fact, as early as the fifth century a scripture belonging to the Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) corpus states that “the Golden Elixir is within your body” (*jindan zai zi xing*).<sup>6</sup> But the process that led to this statement was complex, and to follow it we should look at other sources that develop the terminology seen in the two inscriptions quoted above.

Two of these sources, both of which are now lost, have left traces in Ge Hong’s *Inner Chapters*. After mentioning that the scriptures on alchemy and meditation are kept together on Mount Kunlun, Ge Hong quotes this passage from an anonymous text:

The One resides at the North Pole,  
in the midst of the abyss.  
In front is the Hall of Light (*mingtang*),  
behind is the Crimson Palace (*jianggong*).  
Imposing is the Flowery Canopy (*huagai*),  
great is the Golden Pavilion (*jinlou*)! (*Baopu zi*, 18.324)



Another passage, whose prosodic form is different and therefore is likely to derive from a different text, refers to inner essences circulated and joined by the adept in meditation:

Under Initial Green (shiqing)<sup>7</sup> the Moon is with the Sun:  
 the two halves ascend together and combine to become one.  
 Exiting from the Jade Pond (*yuchi*), it enters the Golden Chambers  
 (*jinshi*);  
 it is as large as a pellet, as yellow as an orange,  
 and has a delicious taste within, as sweet as honey.  
 If you are able to obtain it, be careful not to lose it:  
 once gone you cannot chase it, and it will be extinguished.  
 The pure and white pneuma, utterly subtle and rarefied,  
 ascends to the Obscure Barrier (*youguan*) by bending and twisting three  
 times,  
 and the middle Cinnabar [Field] (*zhongdan*) shines incomparably;  
 when it is established in the Gate of Life (*mingmen*), your bodily form will  
 know no end.  
 Profound! Wondrous! And difficult to investigate. (*Baopu zi*, 6.128)

These two poems contain several terms that appear in contemporary texts related to meditation, and in later texts related to *neidan*: Hall of Light (the upper Cinnabar Field, or one of its “chambers”), Crimson Palace (the middle Cinnabar Field), Flowery Canopy (the eyebrows and, again, the upper Cinnabar Field), Jade Pond (the mouth), Golden Chambers (the lungs), Obscure Barrier (the central space between the kidneys), and Gate of Life (the lower Cinnabar Field, or a locus in its region). These analogies show that a set of cognate meditation practices existed by the third century, and that a common codified terminology was used to describe them.

THE CENTRAL SCRIPTURE OF LAOZI  
 AND THE SCRIPTURE OF THE YELLOW COURT

Both the meditation practices and the relevant terminology continued to be transmitted in the subsequent centuries, first within traditions related to meditation, and later within traditions related to *neidan*. The two main sources that document the relation of these traditions to both *waidan* and *neidan* are the *Central Scripture of Laozi* (*Laozi zhongjing*) and the *Scripture of the Yellow Court* (*Huangting jing*), both of which circulated in Jiangnan during the third century. One detail is sufficient to show the continuity between these two texts and those quoted above. In its descriptions of the inner body, the

*Central Scripture* mentions the Yellow Court, the Cinnabar Field, and the Purple Chamber, i.e., three of the four terms found in the two epigraphs of 165 CE.<sup>8</sup> The *Scripture of the Yellow Court* mentions the Hut, the Yellow Court, and the Cinnabar Field in one of its two versions, and all four terms in the other.<sup>9</sup>

Both the *Central Scripture* and the *Yellow Court* enjoin adepts to visualize the deities who reside within themselves. These deities perform multiple related roles: they serve as administrators of the body, allow the human being to communicate with the major (and in several cases corresponding) gods of the outer pantheon, and personify the formless Dao or impersonal notions such as Yin and Yang and the Five Agents. In both the *Central Scripture* and the *Yellow Court*, moreover, meditation on the inner gods is combined with the visualization of essences and pneumas that adepts drive through the body and deliver to the gods in the five viscera, the three Cinnabar Fields, and other loci in order to provide them with nourishment. Both Shangqing and *neidan* would incorporate not only these practices, but also much of the attached imagery.

In particular, the *Central Scripture* often instructs adepts to visualize a “yellow essence” (*huangjing*) and a “red pneuma” (*chiqi*) that respectively represent the Moon and the Sun. Adepts should merge them with each other and circulate them within their body:

Constantly think that below the nipples are the Sun and the Moon. Within the Sun and the Moon are a yellow essence and a red pneuma that enter the Crimson Palace (*jianggong*); then again they enter the Yellow Court (*huangting*) and the Purple Chamber (*zifang*). The yellow essence and the red pneuma thoroughly fill the Great Granary (*taicang*). (*Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 11)

In this practice, the yellow essence and the red pneuma are moved through the Crimson Palace (heart), the Yellow Court (spleen), and the Purple Chamber (gallbladder), and finally reach the Great Granary (stomach). The purpose is to nourish the Red Child (*chizi*), an infant who resides in the Great Granary and is said to represent the “real self” (*zhenwu*) of the human being. In another instance, the yellow essence and the red pneuma are joined and then ingested:

The saintly man dissolves the pearls; the worthy man liquefies the jade. For dissolving the pearls and liquefying the jade, the method is the same. Dissolving the pearls means ingesting the essence of the Sun: the left eye is the Sun. Liquefying the jade means feeding on the essence of the Moon: the right eye is the Moon. (*Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 39)

The related practice consists in lying down and repeatedly visualizing the yellow essence and the red pneuma that descend from one's eyes and enter one's mouth, so that they may be swallowed.<sup>10</sup>

The *Yellow Court* mentions the same essences and pneumas, saying for instance:

Circulate the purple (*huizi*) and embrace the yellow (*baohuang*) so that they enter the Cinnabar Field;  
an inner light in the Abyssal Chamber (*youshi*) illuminates the Yang Gate (*yangmen*). (*Huangting neijing jing*, sec. 2)

Here the two pneumas are circulated and guided to the upper Cinnabar Field, while the Gate of Life (or Yang Gate) in the lower Cinnabar Field is visualized as irradiated by a light issuing forth from the kidneys (the Abyssal Chamber).

There are clear associations between the essences and pneumas of the Sun and the Moon, delivered by the adept of the *Central Scripture* to his inner gods, and the Yin and Yang essences and pneumas that a *neidan* adept circulates in his body to compound the elixir or nourish the "inner embryo." These associations become explicit when the *Central Scripture* refers to visualizing the pneuma of the Sun descending from the heart and the pneuma of the Moon arising from the kidneys; the adept should "join them making them one, and distribute them to the four limbs."<sup>11</sup> An analogous practice is performed by the *neidan* adept when he joins the Fire of the heart and the Water of the kidneys to generate the first stage of the inner elixir.<sup>12</sup>

Analogies with the alchemical process are also apparent in relation to another source of nourishment for the inner gods and their residences, namely the adept's own salivary juices. The main function of these juices is to aid the ingestion of essences and pneumas, but they are also used to "irrigate" (*guan*) the inner organs and, as we shall see presently, to feed the inner gods.<sup>13</sup> The *Central Scripture* and the *Yellow Court* refer to these juices using terms derived from *waidan* or having alchemical connotations, such as Mysterious Pearl (*xuanzhu*), Jade Sap (*yujiang*), Jade Blossom (*yuying*), Jade Pond (*yuchi*), Jade Liquor (*yuye*), Golden Nectar (*jinli*), and even Golden Liquor (*jinye*). Other sources refer to them as Divine Water (*shenshui*), White Snow (*baixue*), and Golden Essence (*jinjing*), all of which are also known as synonyms of ingredients of *waidan* elixirs. These terms suggest that in providing superior nourishment to the adept and his inner gods, the

salivary juices perform a function analogous to the one that the elixirs, or their ingredients, do in *waidan*. The analogies of essences, pneumas, and salivary juices with *waidan* end where those with *neidan* begin: the adept nourishes himself and his gods not through the ingestion of external substances, but through components of his own inner body; he finds the vital ingredients within himself, and their ingestion takes place internally.

Similar dual associations with both *waidan* and *neidan* are evident in another feature of the methods of the *Central Scripture*. Although offering nourishment to the inner gods is the rule, in some cases it is the adept who asks the gods to deliver nourishment to him. To do so, he addresses invocations to the gods that recall the one pronounced by the Taiqing alchemist before he kindles the fire under the crucible.<sup>14</sup> Now, however, he does not ask the gods to favor the compounding of the elixir; he asks, instead, that they dispense an elixir to him:

The highest god is styled Lord Great One of Original Radiance (Yuanguang Taiyi jun). . . . Below he resides within the heart of human beings. At dawn and at midday, on the *jiawu* and the *bingwu* days, always call him and say: “Old Man of the Southern Ultimate, Lord Great One of Original Radiance! I want to obtain the Dao of long life of the Divine Elixir of the Great One!” (*Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 25)

In an invocation addressed to Master Yellow Gown (Huangchang zi), the father of the Red Child, the adept asks him to obtain “medicinal liquor” (*yao-jiu*) and other nurture:

Master Yellow Gown! Master Yellow Gown! Real Man of the Yellow Court, reside in myself! Summon for me medicinal liquor, dried pine-seeds, rice, and broth of millet, so that I can eat and drink of them! Let them come right now! (*Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 11)

Double Indigo, the god of the liver, who is none other than Lord Lao himself, is invoked for the same purpose:

Flesh Child (Rouzi), Double Indigo (Lanlan)! Be my friend, stay here and be my envoy! I want to obtain the Divine Elixir of the Great One and ingest it! Let me live a long life! Do not leave my body! Constantly reside within the Palace of the Purple Chamber, joined with the Dao! (*Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 28)

If the term “inner elixir” was not already charged with other meanings and associations, it could be an appropriate definition for the nourishment that the inner gods are invited to provide. In fact, whether its elixir is “outer”

or “inner,” the *Central Scripture* regards alchemy and meditation as equivalent when it says: “If you cannot ingest the Divine Elixir and the Golden Liquor, and do not labor to become skilled in meditation, you merely bring suffering upon yourself.”<sup>15</sup> In another passage, the *Central Scripture* states: “If you constantly ingest breath, you will obtain a long life and be a divine immortal. If you visualize the gods and ingest the elixir, you will become a Real Man.”<sup>16</sup>

#### THE RED CHILD AND THE INNER EMBRYO

As we have seen, leading the yellow essence and the red pneuma to the stomach provides nourishment to the Red Child, the innermost deity residing within the human being. The *Central Scripture* describes him as follows:<sup>17</sup>

The self is the son of the Dao; this is what he is. Human beings also have him, not only me. He resides precisely in the ducts of the stomach, the Great Granary. He sits facing due south on a couch of jade and pearls, and a flowery canopy of yellow clouds covers him. He wears clothes with pearls of five hues. His mother resides above on his right, embracing and nourishing him; his father resides above on his left, instructing and defending him. (*Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 12)

The Child’s mother is the Jade Woman of Mysterious Radiance (Xuanguang Yunü). Through the nourishment that she provides, the Child “feeds on yellow gold and jade dumplings, and ingests the Divine Elixir and the *zhi* plant.” But the Child should also be nourished by the adept: “He feeds on the yellow essence and the red pneuma, drinking and ingesting the Fountain of Nectar (*liquan*),” another name of the salivary juices produced during the meditation practices. The Child’s father, whose task is “instructing and defending” his son, is the Yellow Old Man of the Central Ultimate (Zhongji Huanglao), god of the Yellow Court. The *Central Scripture* often calls him Master Yellow Gown (Huangchang zi).<sup>18</sup> Both the Red Child, under the name of Child-Cinnabar (Zidan), and Yellow Gown are also mentioned in the “Inner” version of the *Yellow Court*, whereas the “Outer” version grants Child-Cinnabar the honor of being the only deity mentioned by name in the entire text.<sup>19</sup>

The alchemical imagery associated with the nourishment of the Red Child—gold, jade, the Divine Elixir itself—does not need to be emphasized again. Another point, instead, requires attention, namely the relation of the Red Child to the inner embryo of *neidan*. This relation is complex, for the

image of the embryo changes according to the understanding of *neidan* itself: although some *neidan* texts emphasize the notion of “generating” and “raising” the inner embryo through practices performed for this purpose, others refer to the embryo, and to the elixir itself, as an image of one’s own authentic self, and of one’s own awakened state, which is inherent and does not need to be “generated.” Both ways of seeing have affinities with the image of the “inner infant” as it appears in the *Central Scripture*. On the one hand, nourishing the Red Child in meditation and generating and raising the embryo in *neidan* are achieved through similar practices, namely by joining essences and pneumas related to the Sun and the Moon, or to Yin and Yang. On the other hand, the “inner infant” and the inner embryo are both representations of the “real self,” which, just like the Red Child in the *Central Scripture*, is innate and is raised by the same forces that sustain life—represented by the Child’s parents in the *Central Scripture*—but also requires one’s continuous sustenance and nourishment.

#### ALCHEMICAL IMAGES IN SHANGQING MEDITATION PRACTICES

The *Central Scripture of Laozi* and the *Scripture of the Yellow Court* merge and develop several trends apparent in earlier or contemporary sources: the visualization of inner gods, the practices for channeling the inner essences and pneumas, and especially the use of alchemical images and terms to define loci of the inner body. Other stages of development, however, were necessary before *neidan* could emerge as it is known from the Tang period onward. Shangqing Daoism is associated with the first of these stages.

Methods of visualization of the deities of the inner pantheon, and chants addressed to them, form the subject matter of the *Authentic Scripture of the Great Cavern* (*Dadong zhenjing*), the main Shangqing text. Although this pantheon differs from the ones of the *Central Scripture* and the *Yellow Court*, the “inner infant” plays within it the same central role.<sup>20</sup> The *Scripture of the Great Cavern* ends by describing how an adept generates an inner “divine being” (see Fig. 9) by coagulating and ingesting pneumas that descend from the Muddy Pellet (*niwan*), the upper Cinnabar Field in the region of the brain:

Visualize a five-colored purple cloud entering within yourself from your Muddy Pellet. Then ingest that divine cloud with your saliva. It will coalesce into a divine being (*shenshen*), surrounded by a five-colored, purple, white, and roseate round luminous wheel. The god is inside the wheel. Be-

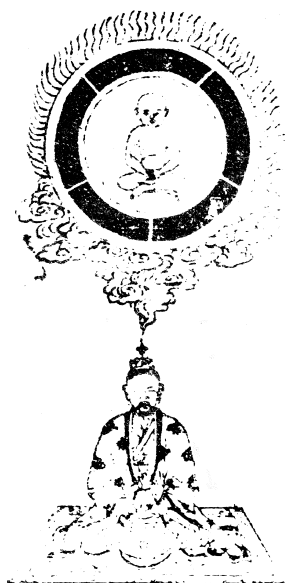


FIGURE 9 Generating the “inner infant” in meditation. *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* (Authentic Scripture of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity; CT 6), 6.13b.

low he spreads himself within your entire body, distributing his pneuma to your nine openings and coagulating it over the tip of your tongue. (*Shangqing dadong zhenjing*, 6.13b–14a)

In other contexts, the image of the “inner infant” or the inner embryo reveals alchemical connotations even stronger than those seen in the pre-Shangqing texts. One of the Shangqing revealed scriptures applies the term Nine Elixirs (*jiudan*) to the pneumas of the Nine Heavens (*jiutian zhi qi*) received by human beings during their embryonic development:

In the first month, one receives the pneuma; in the second, the numina (*ling*); in the third, they are transformed together; in the fourth, one coagulates the essence; in the fifth, the trunk and the head are established; in the sixth, one alters oneself and takes form; in the seventh, the [inner] deities take their positions; in the eighth, the nine orifices are luminous; and in the ninth, the pneumas of the Nine Heavens are distributed and one obtains the voice. In the tenth month, the Director of Destinies (Siming) inscribes the Registers: one receives one’s destiny and is born. Therefore everyone is endowed with the pneumas of the Nine Heavens and the essences of Yin and Yang. These

are called the Nine Elixirs, and together they form the human being.<sup>21</sup>  
(*Shangqing jiudan shanghua taijing zhongji jing*, 3a)

In the view of this and other Shangqing texts, however, the gestation process also accounts for the creation of “knots and nodes” (*jiejie*); their function is “holding together the five viscera,” but eventually they are responsible for one’s death:

When one is generated, there are in the womb twelve knots and nodes that hold the five viscera together. The five viscera are obstructed and squeezed, the knots cannot be untied, and the nodes cannot be removed. Therefore the illnesses of human beings depend on the obstructions caused by these nodes, and the extinction of one’s allotted destiny (i.e., one’s death) depends on the strengthening of these knots. (*Shangqing jiudan shanghua taijing zhongji jing*, 3a–b)

To untie the “knots of death,” the adept is instructed to re-experience his embryonic development in meditation, receiving again the Nine Elixirs, which here denote the pneumas of the Nine Heavens. Then he visualizes the Original Father (*yuanfu*) in his upper Cinnabar Field and the Original Mother (*yuanmu*) in his lower Cinnabar Field, who issue pneumas that the adept joins in his middle Cinnabar Field to generate, this time, an inner immortal body. The Original Father and the Original Mother play, in this practice, a role analogous to the one of the father and the mother of the Red Child in the *Central Scripture*.<sup>22</sup>

Another set of Shangqing methods based on the image of the embryo consists of the practices performed to ensure that the souls of one’s ancestors obtain release from the underworld. Through the meditation practices performed by their descendants, ancestors may “return to the embryo” (*fantai*) and become “immortals in the embryonic state” (*taixian*), obtaining, this time, rebirth in heaven. The notion of purification underlying these practices is also associated with alchemical imagery and terminology: the ancestors rise to the Golden Gate (*jinmen*, a station in the heavenly circuit of the Sun) where they “refine their matter” (*lian zhi*) by bathing themselves in the Water of Smelting Refinement (*yelian zhi shui*).<sup>23</sup>

The role of the Sun as a purifying agent—analogue to the role of fire as a refining agent in *waidan*—recurs in the Shangqing practices based on the images of the Sun and the Moon. Here Shangqing clearly develops the legacy of the earlier traditions represented by the *Central Scripture of Laozi*, where, as we have seen, pneumas and essences associated with these two celestial



bodies perform a major role. In the Shangqing practices, however, the essences and pneumas are not those found within the adept's own body, but those of the Sun and the Moon themselves. In one method, whose analogies with *waidan* are transparent, the adept collects the essences of the Sun and the Moon in a vessel containing water and a talisman, then ingests some of that water and uses the other part to wash himself. In another method, he meditates on the circuits of the Sun and the Moon, then visualizes their essences and joins and ingests them. These and similar methods end with the adept visualizing himself as being ignited by the Sun and transformed into pure light.<sup>24</sup>

The notions underlying these practices have an even deeper relation to alchemy than those seen before. As Isabelle Robinet has noted, the Shangqing texts sometimes exchange the Yin and Yang qualities of the Sun and the Moon, so that each of them is said to contain an essence of the opposite sign (Yin for the Sun, Yang for the Moon).<sup>25</sup> This anticipates an essential pattern of *neidan*, where the alchemical work is based on gathering Yin within Yang (i.e., Real Yin, *zhenyin*) and Yang within Yin (i.e., Real Yang, *zhenyang*) in order to join them and compound the elixir.

### *The Token for the Agreement of the Three and Its Impact*

After those reflected in the earliest sources and in the Shangqing texts, the third historical stage of the encounter between meditation and alchemy was the one that harbored the most durable consequences for the history of both *waidan* and *neidan*. Whereas the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* and the other Taiqing texts emphasize the performance of rites and techniques and devote virtually no space to doctrinal statements, the doctrinal aspects of alchemy are the main focus of many *waidan* sources dating from the Tang period onward. These sources are not concerned with the ritual aspects of the alchemical practice; they explain the alchemical process by borrowing the language and emblems of the *Book of Changes (Yijing)* and of the system of correlative cosmology, and describe the compounding of an elixir made of lead and mercury, which ingredients replace the much larger variety of ingredients typical of the earlier methods.

#### THE TOKEN FOR THE AGREEMENT OF THE THREE IN JIANGNAN

The textual source that played the greatest influence on these changes within the alchemical tradition is the *Token for the Agreement of the Three Ac-*

ording to the *Book of Changes* (*Zhouyi cantong qi*).<sup>26</sup> This text is traditionally deemed to have been written in the second century CE by Wei Boyang, a legendary immortal said to come from the Guiji area of present-day northern Zhejiang. The original Han version of the *Token*, which is lost, was related to the lore of the “studies of the *Changes*” (*yixue*), and may have been one of the apocrypha (*wei*) to the *Book of Changes*. Although some scholars in the past have suggested that the received text was fabricated in the Tang period, evidence of a text entitled *Token for the Agreement of the Three* during the Six Dynasties is not lacking. Tao Hongjing (456–536), the poet Jiang Yan (444–505), and the Confucian scholar Yan Zhitui (531–91) mention this title in their writings. All of them were from Jiangnan or spent a considerable part of their life there, showing that a *Token for the Agreement of the Three* was transmitted in that region during the Six Dynasties. Especially important is the testimony of Jiang Yan, who around 500 CE refers to the use of this text in connection with the compounding of elixirs.<sup>27</sup>

A plausible background for the continued transmission of the Han-dynasty *Token* in Jiangnan is provided by the development of the cosmological tradition. The last great representative of the Han “studies of the *Changes*,” Yu Fan (164–233), is associated with both of the main cosmological patterns used in the received version of the *Token*, those of the Matching Stem (*najia*) and of the Twelve-Stage Ebb and Flow (*shier xiaoxi*), and a commentary to the scripture has even been ascribed to him.<sup>28</sup> Yu Fan came from Guiji, the reputed birthplace of Wei Boyang, and his lineage was one of those that preserved the traditions of the “studies on the *Changes*” in Jiangnan after the end of the Han. It seems likely, therefore, that Yu Fan’s followers continued to transmit the original text of the *Token* in southeastern China during the early Six Dynasties.

The received text of the *Token* is the result of the encounter of that original text with the alchemical traditions of Jiangnan. We know very little about the *waidan* lineages that were related to the scripture during the Six Dynasties, but some materials in this regard are found in the fragmentary corpus of texts attributed to Hugang zi. These writings are the first known *waidan* texts to accord priority to metals—particularly lead and mercury, the two emblematic ingredients of the elixir in the *Token*—over minerals. The corpus attributed to Hugang zi developed during the late Six Dynasties in Jiangnan. The first extant commentary to the *Token*, dating from ca. 700 CE and entirely concerned with *waidan*, demonstrates the continuity between the earlier and the later alchemical traditions of southeastern China:

it contains references to the *Nine Elixirs*, and also quotes methods attributed to Hugang zi.<sup>29</sup>

THE TOKEN FOR THE AGREEMENT OF THE  
THREE AND THE DAOIST MEDITATION TEXTS

From the beginning of the seventh century, no other scripture has had an influence on the history of Chinese alchemy comparable to that of the *Token for the Agreement of the Three*. Through this text, the whole array of emblems and patterns of correlative cosmology entered the language and imagery of alchemy. These emblems make it possible to describe and relate to each other different cosmological configurations represented by Yin and Yang, the Five Agents, the trigrams and hexagrams of the *Book of Changes*, the Celestial Stems and the Earthly Branches, the twenty-eight lunar mansions, and so forth, in ways unknown to the earlier tradition represented by the *Taiqing* and other *waidan* texts.

Alchemy consistently uses these patterns of emblems not only to represent stages or aspects of the alchemical process, but especially to explain how existence, its multiplicity, and its continuous state of change are related to the unity and the constancy of the Dao. In the tradition based on the *Token*, therefore, alchemy becomes both a figurative language to explain the principles that govern the relation between the Dao and the cosmos, the Absolute and the relative, Unity and multiplicity, or timelessness and time, and a way to achieve the understanding of those principles through practices designed to represent them. The *waidan* or *neidan* practices apply those principles to different domains (sometimes with remarkable variations among subtraditions or lineages, especially in the case of *neidan*). The *Token*—which is neither a *waidan* nor a *neidan* text, although it contains allusions to both—provides an illustration of those principles; the task of connecting them to *waidan* and *neidan* is left to a large number of commentaries and related texts that explicate them and apply them to the alchemical practice.

The meditation methods surveyed earlier in the present chapter were relevant to these developments in the history of alchemy in two ways. First, the *Scripture of the Yellow Court* provided the *Token for the Agreement of the Three* with imagery and technical vocabulary. One of the most noticeable examples is the description of the elixir in the *Token*, where it is said to be “square and round and with a diameter of one inch” (*fangyuan jingcun*). This corresponds to a description found in the *Yellow Court*, where the Gate

of Life (*mingmen*, i.e., the lower Cinnabar Field and one of the multiple centers of the human body) is said to be “square and round and with a size of one inch” (*fangyuan yicun*).<sup>30</sup> Altogether, the *Token* shares with the *Yellow Court* no less than five dozen terms and phrases that refer to doctrinal notions, the view of the human being, and self-cultivation practices, as well as several descriptive terms.<sup>31</sup> Both texts, moreover, quote or allude to the same sentences in the *Laozi* and the *Book of Changes*.<sup>32</sup>

Besides this, the *Yellow Court* also influenced the changes that occurred in the alchemical tradition in an indirect way. Not all the shared terms and expressions are used with the same or a similar purport in the *Yellow Court* and the *Token*. The *Token* actually uses some terms and phrases derived from the *Yellow Court* in order to criticize the practices at the basis of the latter text. For instance, the adept of the *Yellow Court* should “perform ablutions (*muyu*) to attain complete purity, and discard fat and fragrant foods.” For the *Token*, “performing ablutions, fasting, or keeping the precepts [. . .] is like using glue to repair a pot.” According to the *Yellow Court*, “if you observe internally (*neishi*) and gaze intimately, you see the Perfected everywhere.” The *Token* counters that “if you observe internally, your thoughts will absorb your mind.” In the *Yellow Court*, “you open up the hundred channels (*baimai*) and unblock the blood and the fluids.” This, for the *Token*, means only that “your hundred channels stir like a cauldron.” In the practices of the *Yellow Court*, one should “tightly close the Golden Pass (*jinguan*) and conceal the Pivotal Mechanism (*shuji*).” The *Token* says that those practices result in “your actions turning against you, for you have contravened and lost the Pivotal Mechanism.”<sup>33</sup> Finally, the *Yellow Court* recommends the steadfast practice of its methods, saying that “by being sleepless day and night, you will achieve perfection.” The *Token* replies that “by being sleepless day and night, and never taking a pause month after month, daily your body becomes tired and exhausted.”<sup>34</sup>

Some of the sentences referred to above are found in a section of the *Token* that distinguishes alchemy from several other practices. The initial part of this section deserves a full quotation:

This is not the method of passing through the viscera, contemplating within and concentrating on something;  
of treading the Dipper and pacing the asterisms, using the six *jia* as chronograms (*richen*);  
of sating yourself with the nine-and-one in the Way of Yin, fouling and tampering with the original womb (*yuanbao*);

of ingesting breath till it chirps in your stomach, exhaling the upright and inhaling the external and evil.

By being sleepless day and night,  
and never taking a pause month after month,  
daily your body becomes tired and exhausted:  
you are “vague and indistinct,” but look like a fool.

Your hundred channels stir like a cauldron,  
unable to clear and to settle;  
by piling soil you set up space for an altar,  
and from morning to sunset reverently worship. (*Zhouyi cantong qi fen-zhang zhu*, sec. 8)

All this, concludes the *Token*, will be pointless when “you leave your bodily form to rot.”

Two different meditation practices are mentioned in the passage quoted above, namely “passing through the viscera” (*lizang*) and “treading the Dipper and pacing the asterisms” (*lüxing bu douxiu*). The first term appears frequently in meditation texts, including the *Central Scripture of Laozi*.<sup>35</sup> The second expression alludes to the Shangqing meditation methods of “pacing the celestial net” (*bugang*).<sup>36</sup> Other terms in this passage allude to other practices. “Six jia” (*liujia*) refers to calendrical deities, in particular those of the divination method of the “orphan-empty” (*guxu*), which in one of its applications allows adepts ritually to exit the cycle of time and the directions of space.<sup>37</sup> “Way of Yin” (*yindao*) denotes the sexual techniques, and “nine-and-one” (*jiuyi*) refers to “nine shallow and one deep” penetrations in intercourse. “Reverently worship” obviously alludes to rites performed in honor of minor deities and spirits. The last sentence in the first paragraph, as well as the first two lines in the second quatrain, refers to breathing techniques.

This section of the *Token*, in other words, mentions a sample of methods that were current during the Six Dynasties and denounces them as inadequate. The *Token* is not content with criticizing these methods, but refers to them with irony. “Exhaling the old and inhaling the new” (*tugu naxin*), a common expression that denotes ingesting and circulating breath, is overturned into “exhaling the upright and inhaling the external and evil” (*tuzheng xi waixie*). Breath is ingested “till it chirps in your bowels.” The adept who devotes himself to these practices is “vague and indistinct” (*huanghu*), an expression employed in the *Laozi* and many other texts to refer to the Dao itself, but deliberately used in the *Token* to describe a practitioner who “looks like a fool.”

For the authors of the alchemical version of the *Token*, borrowing terms from *Scripture of the Yellow Court* was an effective way to assert the superiority of alchemy over the earlier meditation practices. Similar borrowings, although less frequent, also occur from the *Central Scripture of Laozi*. One example may be enough as regards this text. On three occasions, the *Central Scripture* instructs its adepts to visualize their inner essences and pneumas, saying that they should “moisten and impregnate” (*runze*) several organs of the body.<sup>38</sup> The *Cantong qi* uses the same expression, but with a different intent: it is not the viscera of the adept in meditation to be “moistened and impregnated,” but the cosmos itself when the Sun and the Moon join with each other at the end of a time cycle, and release their “nurturing fluids” (*ziye*, a compound formed by two terms that in the *Central Scripture* and other texts define the salivary juices). This event is related to one of the cardinal notions in the *Token*, namely the periodic joining of the Sun and the Moon:

Between the last day of a month and the first day of the next,  
they join their tallies and move to the Center.  
In chaos, vaporous and opaque,  
female and male follow each other:  
their nurturing fluids moisten and impregnate,  
emanating and transmuting, they flow and pervade. (*Zhouyi cantong qi*  
*fenzhang zhu*, sec. 18)

This passage refers to the Sun and the Moon as respectively harboring Real Yin and Real Yang. Their conjunction, which occurs at the end of each month, when the Sun and the Moon “join their tallies and move to the Center,” causes Real Yin and Real Yang, the dual aspects of the timeless Dao, to join and generate the next time cycle. These continuous temporal sequences are responsible for the occurrence of change, but in the view of the *Token* they are also the means through which Real Yin and Real Yang “flow and pervade” the cosmos, rising and descending through all its time cycles.

### *A New View of Alchemy*

In this renewed context, the inner gods of the Daoist meditation practices and the ritual framework of the Taiqing alchemical practices serve no more. It is enough to look at some clusters of terms that recur in the *Token* to realize how its adept is not asked to meditate on the deities that reside within himself, or to address those who dwell in heaven. Instead, he surveys (*can*), examines (*cha*), investigates (*kao*), explores (*tan*), inquires (*ji*), and inspects

(*shen*); he gauges (*cun*) and measures (*du*); he reflects (*si*), ponders (*lii*), infers (*tui*), and assesses (*kui*). This is not mere intellectual activity but takes place, instead, through “contemplation” (*guan*).

The function of connecting what is above to what is below (where “what is below” includes the adept who practices alchemy) is not performed by the outer and the inner gods approached through ritual or meditation, but by a wide set of cosmological and alchemical emblems, all of which correspond to the others. Among them, the three most important ones are the following:

1. In terms of emblems of the *Book of Changes*, Unity or the One (the supreme aspect of the Dao in the cosmos) is represented by a single unbroken line (—) or by the trigram *qian* ☰. Its Yin and Yang aspects are represented by a single broken line (--) or by the trigram *kun* ☷, and by a single unbroken line or by the trigram *qian* ☰, respectively. Real Yang contained within Yin and Real Yin contained within Yang are represented by the trigrams *kan* ☵ and *li* ☲, respectively. When the alchemical process is described through these emblems, it consists in drawing the inner line out of *kan* ☵ and placing it in *li* ☲ in order to restore *qian* ☰ and *kun* ☷, which are then joined to reestablish Unity, or the state of Pure Yang (*chunyang*).
2. In terms of the Five Agents, the alchemical process inverts the standard “generative” (*xiangsheng*) sequence of the Agents (Wood-Fire-Earth-Metal-Water), and produces Metal (—) from Water (☵), and Wood (--) from Fire (☲).
3. In terms of alchemical emblems, Real Yin and Real Yang are represented by Real Mercury (*zhenhong*) and Real Lead (*zhenqian*), respectively. Real Mercury is refined from native cinnabar (Yang containing Real Yin, or the broken line within *li* ☲), and Real Lead is refined from native lead (Yin containing Real Yang, or the unbroken line within *kan* ☵).<sup>39</sup>

All these emblems are intermediate between the Dao and the world, and serve the purpose of expressing their “wondrous unity” and of framing a practice that offers a way of access to it.

#### LEAD AND MERCURY

As lead and mercury are the two main ingredients of the outer and the inner elixir, their role in the traditions based on the *Token for the Agreement of the Three* requires attention. Although the earliest known method based exclusively on cinnabar is found in the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*,<sup>40</sup> the early texts of the Taiqing tradition, and even more so the *waidan* texts incorporated

into the Shangqing corpus, give priority to methods based on a large variety of ingredients. By the middle of the Tang period, however, the methods based on refining mercury from cinnabar had grown in importance. The best illustration of the enhanced role of cinnabar is found in the writings of Chen Shaowei, who was active during the second decade of the eighth century. His two works (originally part of a single treatise) describe the preparation of an elixir obtained by refining cinnabar. In the first part of the process, each cycle yields a “gold” that can be ingested or used as an ingredient in the next cycle. In the second part of the process, the final product of the first part is used as an ingredient of a Reverted Elixir (*huandan*). Without any explicit mention of the *Token for the Agreement of the Three*, or any apparent reference to its system, Chen Shaowei describes his method using cosmological emblems, especially in the portions devoted to the stages of heating.<sup>41</sup>

Some Tang sources related to the *Token for the Agreement of the Three* explicitly criticize such methods as the one described by Chen Shaowei through their rejection of cinnabar and their advocacy of lead and mercury. Invariably, these sources present as their rationale the fact that a Yin or Yang ingredient alone cannot produce the elixir. The *waidan* commentary to the *Token* dating from about 700 CE, to which we referred above, says in this regard:

Without male and female, how could there be fixation, transmutation, and accomplishment of the elixir? The male is mercury, the female is the essence of lead. Jiuyuan jun said: “Ingesting only the reddened mercury (i.e., refined mercury) is called ‘orphan Yang’ (*guyang*), and ingesting only the flower of lead (i.e., refined lead) is called ‘orphan Yin’ (*guyin*). Therefore lead and mercury need each other to accomplish the elixir.” . . . If the elixir is accomplished without obtaining both Yin and Yang, it would not obtain its principle. When the two ingredients accomplish the elixir and are ingested together, this is the Way of the correct conjunction of Yin and Yang. (*Zhouyi cantong qi zhu*, 1.21b–22a)

Another passage of the commentary addresses its criticism to the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* itself, showing that the denunciation was not limited to methods based on cinnabar and mercury, but was extended to any method that was seen as not accomplishing a proper conjunction of Yin and Yang:

According to the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* (*Jiudan jing*), one should smear the crucible with the Flower of Metal (*jinhua*, i.e., refined lead) in order to nourish mercury. But could one ever use the words “Yin and Yang”



or “Dragon and Tiger” if [the elixir] is accomplished by placing only mercury in an empty tripod? It is necessary to add to and subtract from what is different (*bie*). If [mercury] is used alone, this would amount to using the word “sublime” (*miao*) to define the “orphan Yang.” Jiuyuan jun said: “An elixir made of ‘orphan Yang’ cannot be ingested as it is: one should accomplish the elixir by also availing oneself of Yin. If one stops when lead is accomplished, could one use it alone without a Yin ingredient?” (*Zhouyi cantong qi zhu*, 2.45a–b)

The reference to the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* seems to allude to the method for making the Seventh Elixir, where mercury is placed in a crucible luted with the Mysterious and Yellow.<sup>42</sup>

One of the earliest *waidan* texts to emphasize the role of lead and mercury as ingredients of the elixir, Zhang Jiugai’s *Treatise of the Perfected Zhang on Metals, Stones, and Cinnabar* (*Zhang zhenren jinshi lingsha lun*) dating from the mid-eighth century, provides a similar explanation of why one should not use only cinnabar:

The common people who search for immortality by ingesting only lustrous cinnabar (*guangming sha*) and purple cinnabar (*zisha*), without a process for the conjunction [of Yin and Yang], go afar from the Way. . . . One cannot transcend the generations [of mortals] by ingesting lustrous cinnabar or purple cinnabar. Why? Because the Reverted Elixir, taking the essences of Yin and Yang, is patterned on the creative and transformative action of Heaven and Earth. . . . If the Yin of mercury within cinnabar alone forms the body [of the elixir] and does not couple with Yang to generate [the elixir], it cannot join the Four Emblems (*sixiang*) to each other and cannot put the Five Agents in motion (*yun*). Therefore an orphan Yin cannot nourish anything, and a lone Yang cannot generate anything. It is the coupling of Yin and Yang that accomplishes the Reverted Elixir. (*Zhang zhenren jinshi lingsha lun*, 4a–b)

Finally, two other Tang texts related to the *Token for the Agreement of the Three* assert the superiority of lead and mercury over all other minerals:<sup>43</sup>

The arts of the Great Elixir derive from lead and mercury, and the principles of lead and mercury are the foundation of the Great Elixir. (*Dadan qianhong lun*, 1a)

Therefore one knows that the sublimity of the Great Elixir is owed only to the fact that lead and mercury are the perfect ingredients (*zhiyao*); it does not consist in using the four yellows and the eight minerals (*sihuang bashi*). If the pneuma of any mineral ingredient enters the two substances that

make the Great Elixir, this will be extremely poisonous. (*Danlun jue zhixin jian*, 1a)

With its mention of the “four yellows” (realgar, orpiment, arsenic, and sulphur) and the “eight minerals” (cinnabar, realgar, mica, malachite, sulphur, salt, saltpeter, and orpiment), the last passage quoted above echoes the admonishment of the *Token for the Agreement of the Three*: “Dispose of realgar, get rid of the eight minerals!”<sup>44</sup>

These changes in the understanding of the alchemical process affected not only the history of *waidan*, but also the rise and development of *neidan*. From the beginning of the Tang period, some authors began to describe the alchemical process as happening entirely within the human being, with no dependence on minerals, metals, instruments, or fire, as other alchemists had used earlier, and employing the same terminology, imagery, and symbolism as those found in the *Token for the Agreement of the Three*. The earliest extant text that can be labeled as *neidan* in this sense is a short treatise written by Liu Zhigu in the first half of the eighth century, which emphatically criticizes the *waidan* interpretations of the *Token* and offers its first *neidan* reading.<sup>45</sup> The development of *neidan* in the form it took from the Tang period onward would not have been possible without the earlier traditions of Daoist meditation, and occurred in parallel with two shifts, related to each other, in *waidan*—from a ritual framework to a cosmological framework, and from methods based on cinnabar or other ingredients to methods based on lead and mercury.

Due to the series of developments that I have outlined in this chapter, the alchemy of the Great Clarity lost its reason to exist. Adepts began to look at alchemy as a way to express and to understand the principles that govern the cosmos, but no longer as a means of getting closer to the gods and warding off demons and spirits. The classic system of Daoist cosmography, as expressed in the scheme of the Three Caverns (*sandong*), had no place in these new traditions, for the compounding of the elixirs was no longer seen as a means of rising to a higher heaven. Complex cosmological notions and patterns of abstract emblems now played a role unknown in the earlier tradition. The older ways of compounding the elixirs did not fit into this new view of the import of alchemy, and no author after the mid-Tang period felt the need to write about the simple methods, rites, and ceremonies of the Great Clarity.



## **Appendixes**



DATES OF TEXTS IN  
THE WAIDAN CORPUS

The extant *waidan* 外丹 literature consists of approximately one hundred texts found in the Daoist Canon (*Daozang* 道藏). Most of them are included there as independent texts, while some are part of the *Yunji qiqian* 外丹 (Seven Lots from the Boo“case of the Clouds), an anthology of Daoist writings dating from ca. 1025 (for a list see Lagerwey, *Le Yun-ji qi-qian: Structure et sources*, xlvi 1). A few sources have been preserved outside the Canon (see Zhang Jueren, *Zhongguo liandan shu yu danyao*, 25–30), but a large majority of *waidan* texts are lost (see Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 398–419).

The two tables in this appendix list the dated texts and those whose date can be established by internal or external evidence. The first table shows texts bearing reliable dates. It lists eight works, but two of them (CT 928 and CT 944) contain variant versions of the same text and another (CT 233) is a collection of earlier methods. No more than six of the hundred or so extant *waidan* texts, therefore, contain a reliable indication of their date. The second table shows the texts that can be dated with reasonable accuracy. Except for the *Taiqing jinye shenqi jing* 太清金液神氣經 (CT 880), whose origins, despite the Taiqing prefix in the title, are unclear, all texts indicated in the second table as dating from between the Han and the Six Dynasties

have been used as sources of the present study. Some of the extant texts were almost certainly written after the Song period—e.g., the *Chunyang Lü zhenren yaoshi zhi* 純陽呂真人藥石製 (CT 903) and the *Xuanyuan Huangdi shuijing yaofa* 軒轅黃帝水經藥法 (CT 929)—but their exact date has not yet been established.

*Waidan texts bearing reliable dates.*

Date	Title	Notes
806	<i>Shiyao erya</i> 石藥爾雅 (CT 901)	Date of preface
812	<i>Lingfei san zhuanxin lu</i> 靈飛散傳信錄 (CT 943)	Date in text
855	<i>Xuanjie lu</i> 懸解錄 (CT 928)	Date in text
855	<i>Yingmen gong miaojie lu</i> 鷹門公妙解錄 (CT 944)	Same text as CT 928
1020	<i>Danfang aolun</i> 丹房奧論 (CT 920)	Date of preface
1052	<i>Huandan zhongxian lun</i> 還丹眾仙 (CT 233)	Date of preface; includes Six Dynasties and later materials
1163	<i>Danfang xuzhi</i> 丹房須知 (CT 900)	Date of preface
1225	<i>Jinhua chongbi danjing bizhi</i> 金華沖碧丹經秘旨 (CT 914)	Date in text

*Waidan texts datable with reasonable accuracy.*

Date	Title	Notes
HAN/SIX DYNASTIES TEXTS		
orig. Han	<i>Taiqing jing tianshi koujue</i> 太清經天師口訣 (CT 883)	Six Dynasties or early Tang commentary (before 683)
orig. Han	<i>Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue</i> 黃帝九鼎神丹經訣, j. 1 (CT 885)	Tang commentary (649/683)
orig. Han	<i>Baopu zi shenxian jinzbuo jing</i> 抱朴子神仙金鈞經, j. 1 (CT 917)	Six Dynasties commentary (sixth cent.); attribution to Ge Hong is groundless
orig. Han	<i>Sanshiliu shuifa</i> 三十六水法 (CT 930)	Compiled at different times between the Han and the early Tang (before 683)
Han/Six Dynasties	<i>Taiqing jinye shendan jing</i> 太清金液神丹經 (CT 880)	
Han/Six Dynasties	<i>Taiqing jinye shenqi jing</i> 太清金液神氣經 (CT 882)	
Early Six Dynasties	<i>Taiji zhenren jiu zhuan huandan jing yaojue</i> 太極真人九轉還丹經要訣 (CT 889)	Part of the Shangqing revealed corpus

Date	Title	Notes
Early Six Dynasties	<i>Taiwei lingshu ziwen langgan huadan shenzhen shangjing</i> 太微靈書紫文琅華丹神真上經 (CT 255)	Part of the Shangqing revealed corpus
Six Dynasties/ Early Tang	<i>Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing</i> 九轉流珠神仙九丹經外丹 (CT 952)	Includes variant version of the Nine Elixirs
TANG TEXTS		
Tang (620/780)	<i>Penglai shan xizao huandan ge</i> 蓬萊山西灶還丹歌 (CT 916)	
Tang (after 686)	<i>Jinshi bu wuji shu jue</i> 金石簿五九數訣 (CT 907)	
Tang comm. (ca. 700)	<i>Zhouyi cantong qi</i> 周易參同契 (CT 999)	
Tang comm. (ca. 700)	<i>Zhouyi cantong qi zhu</i> 周易參同契註 (CT 1004)	
Tang (ca. 700)	<i>Taiqing danjing yaojue</i> 太清 丹經要訣 ( <i>Yunji qiqian</i> , j. 71)	Includes Six Dynasties materials
Tang (712/734)	<i>Dadong lian zhenbao jing xiufu lingsha miaoju</i> 大洞鍊真寶經修伏靈砂妙訣 (CT 890)	
Tang (712/734)	<i>Dadong lian zhenbao jing jiuhan jindan miaoju</i> 大洞鍊真寶經九還金丹妙訣 (CT 891)	
Tang (734)	<i>Yudong dashen dansha zhenyao jue</i> 玉洞大神丹砂真要訣 (CT 896)	Shorter version of CT 890 and CT 891
Tang (758/759)	<i>Taiqing shibi ji</i> 太清石壁記 (CT 881)	Includes Six Dynasties materials
Tang (742/770)	<i>Zhang zhenren jinshi lingsha lun</i> 張真人金石靈砂論 (CT 887)	
Tang (before 806)	<i>Wei Boyang qifan dansha jue</i> 魏伯陽七返丹砂訣 (CT 888)	Song commentary (before 1161)
Tang	<i>Tongxuan bishu</i> 通玄祕術 (CT 942)	Late ninth century, based on an earlier version
Tang	<i>Cantong qi wu xianglei biyao</i> 參同契五相類祕要 (CT 905)	Song commentary (1111/1117)
Five Dynasties (937/958)	<i>Danfang jianyuan</i> 丹方鑑源 (CT 925)	Originally Tang (ca. 762), present text of the Five Dynasties
Tang/ Five Dynasties	<i>Yin zhenjun jinshi wu xianglei</i> 陰真 君金石五相類 (CT 906)	
SONG TEXTS		
Song (992/1042)	<i>Dadan ji</i> 大丹記 (CT 899)	
Song (992/1042?)	<i>Lingbao zhongzhen danjue</i> 靈寶眾真丹訣 (CT 419)	
Song (11th cent.)	<i>Lingsha dadan bijue</i> 靈砂大丹祕訣 (CT 897)	
Song (13th cent.)	<i>Shenxian yangsheng bishu</i> 神仙養生祕術 (CT 948)	





ADDITIONAL NOTES  
ON GREAT CLARITY  
AND RELATED TEXTS

*Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions*  
(*Sanshiliu shuifa* 三十六水法)

The received version of the *Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions* (CT 930) includes fifty-nine recipes for the solution of forty-two minerals, but states that the methods for the last seven substances were added to an old version” (*guben* 古本) containing the methods for the first thirty-six substances (thirty-five in the present text).<sup>1</sup> The commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* quotes thirteen methods concerning the solution of eight minerals, namely alum (three methods), realgar (two methods), cinnabar (two methods), saltpeter, sulphur, salt, orpiment (two methods), and magnetite.<sup>2</sup> The commentary also provides evidence on the date of the received version of this text when it states that the *Scripture of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions* contains a method for the solution of common salt (*yan* 鹽) and a method for the solution of Tur“estan salt (*rongyan* 戎鹽).”<sup>3</sup> These two methods respectively appear in the first and the second part of the current *Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions*, which therefore must have reached its present form by the middle of the seventh century.

The *Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions* is translated in Ts ao,

Ho, and Needham, “An Early Mediaeval Chinese Alchemical Text on Aqueous Solutions,” except for the final section on ritual. Note that the characters *gao qi yue* 高起曰, found at the beginning of this section, do not introduce a quotation from an alchemist ( “Gao Qi said . . .”), but are an error for *zhaiqi ri* 齋起日 ( “On the day in which you start the purification practices . . .”), as shown by quotations of the same passage in the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* and in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*.<sup>4</sup>

### *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs (Jiudan jing 九丹經)*

Despite the importance and the renown of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, no text entitled *Jiudan jing* or *Jiuding danjing* 九鼎丹經 is listed in the bibliographies of the Standard Histories. The only wor“ possibly related to the *Nine Elixirs* to be mentioned in a pre-modern bibliographic source is the now-lost *Huangdi danjue yuhan biwen* 黃帝丹訣玉函祕文 (Secret Script of the Jade Cas“et with Instructions on the Elixirs of the Yellow Emperor), a wor“ in one chapter attributed to Pu Geng 蒲庚 and listed in the *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄解題 (Annotated Catalogue of the Zhi hai Studio; mid-thirteenth century).<sup>5</sup> The *Zhizhai shulu jieti* refers to Pu Geng as a Gentleman-Litterateur (*wenlin lang* 文林郎), an honorific title bestowed from the Sui period onward. For references to the entire *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* 黃帝九鼎神丹經訣 (Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor; CT 885, hereafter referred to as *Jiudan jingjue*) in historical bibliographies, see Appendix C.

As noted above (Chapter 3), the *Nine Elixirs* has come down to us in two versions, one contained in the first chapter of the *Jiudan jingjue* and the other included in the *Scripture of the Liquid Pearl in Nine Cycles and of the Nine Elixirs of the Divine Immortals (Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing 九轉流珠神仙九丹經; CT 952)*.<sup>6</sup> Besides the *Scripture* itself, four other entirely or partially extant wor“s have the *Nine Elixirs* as their main subject:

- [1] *Songs*.” The *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* forms one of the two main textual layers in the *Scripture of the Liquid Pearl*. The other layer consists of anonymous “Songs” ( “Ge” 歌) in heptasyllabic verses. The cryptic language and imagery of the poems are explicated through quotations from the *Nine Elixirs* that amount to virtually its entire text, arranged here as a commentary to the corresponding lines of poetry. The quotations from the “Songs” in the *Liquid Pearl* are clearly incomplete: in some instances only the first four or the last three characters

of a line are cited, and verses traceable to several stages of the compounding are missing. Moreover, the *Liquid Pearl* quotes the Songs” extensively in the sections on the First, the Second, and the Third Elixirs, more briefly in other sections, and not at all in the section on the Eighth Elixir. The quoted fragments refer to different aspects of the methods, such as the choice of the ingredients, the preparation of the crucible, the heating and collection of the elixirs, and their properties.<sup>7</sup>

- [2] *Explanations.*” Besides the Songs,” the *Liquid Pearl* includes a short section entitled “Explanations” ( Jie” 解), concerned with the main ingredient (cinnabar), the crucible, the first heating cycle, and the collection of the First Elixir. These passages and the corresponding stages of the alchemical process are arranged in the same sequence as that of the version of the *Nine Elixirs* found in the *Jiudan jingjue*. There follow instructions on the transmutation of the elixir into gold, the ingestion of the elixir, and the second heating cycle, here given in a different order. The single passages of the “Explanations,” nevertheless, correspond almost verbatim to those in the version of the *Jiudan jingjue*. These similarities and differences suggest that the “Explanations” might derive from a lost third recension of the *Nine Elixirs* besides the ones found in the *Jiudan jingjue* and the *Liquid Pearl*.<sup>8</sup>
- [3] *Songs of the Perfected.*” The Songs” in the *Liquid Pearl* are not the only “norn wor“ that expounds the doctrines and practices of the *Nine Elixirs* in verses. The *Jiudan jingjue* quotes parts of a “Songs of the Perfected” ( Zhenren ge” 真人歌) on the compounding of lead and mercury, which refers to the method of the Mysterious and Yellow described in the *Nine Elixirs*. Some verses echo those of the Songs” in the *Liquid Pearl*, but the two wor“s are certainly different.<sup>9</sup>
- [4] *Secret Instructions.*” Finally, the Secret Written Instructions on the Elixirs of the Nine Tripods” ( Jiuding dan yin wenjue” 九鼎丹隱文訣) is found at the end of the *Jiudan jingjue*.<sup>10</sup> This wor“ represents in several ways the culmination of the commentary, which opens with the text of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, continues with chapters devoted to doctrinal, ritual, and technical facets of the alchemical wor“, and ends with a section explaining the methods of the *Nine Elixirs*. The details provided by the “Secret Instructions” on each method vary in length from a few lines to several pages. In some instances, they are of significant value for reading the *Nine Elixirs* and the related texts. Only here, for instance, is it explained that some versions of the *Nine Elixirs* dealt with the *Liquid Pearl* within the section on the First Elixir. This throws light on passages in the other related texts, making it possible to refer them either to the First Elixir or to the *Liquid Pearl*.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the

Secret Instructions” makes it clear that the portion of the *Nine Elixirs* concerned with the Second Elixir describes several independent methods arranged in a sequence.<sup>12</sup> Also worthy of note is the recipe for the aqueous solution of magnetite used for making the First and Second Elixirs, which is not given in the *Nine Elixirs*.<sup>13</sup>

Another text related to the *Nine Elixirs* and its commentary that requires a brief mention is the *Instructions on the Scripture of the Heart Elixir of the Highest Cavern* (*Shangdong xindan jingjue* 上洞心丹經訣; CT 950), a work in three chapters based on the methods of the Heart Elixir (*xindan* 心丹) and the Elixir of the Divine Immortals in Nine Cycles (*shenxian jiuzhuan dan* 神仙九轉丹).<sup>14</sup> Although nothing indicates that this text belonged to the Taiqing tradition, a great part of it consists of quotations from the introductory section of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* and from different chapters of its commentary, the *Jiudan jingjue*. The shared passages between the *Heart Elixir* (left) and the *Jiudan jingjue* (right) are the following (the reproductions of talismans are included):

1.3b, 4a–9a	=	1.1b, 1.2a–b, 6.1a–4b, 13.2b, 1.3a
2.1b–4b, 14b–15b	=	1.1a, 13.1a–2b, 3.5b–6b, 2.4a–b
3.3a–17b	=	4.2a–3a, 4.3b–5b (partly summarized), 5.2b–4a (with omissions), 5.4a–7a, 5.8b–10a, 7.1a, 7.1b–2a, 7.3b, 19.4a–8a, 20.1a–6b (with omission of an unrelated passage as remarked above in note 24 to Chapter 5)

The *Heart Elixir* is certainly based on the *Jiudan jingjue*, and not vice versa. This is clear from the comparison of the two texts, but one detail is sufficient to demonstrate it: that the *Heart Elixir* shares passages with the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, its commentary, and the “Secret Instructions” would be possible only if the *Jiudan jingjue* had been available to its author.

Despite the existence of a corpus of texts originating from the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, the extent to which the received text in the *Jiudan jingjue* reproduces the version known to Ge Hong in the early fourth century is not possible to determine exactly. While the summaries in the *Inner Chapters* authenticate passages concerned with the ritual background of the early Taiqing tradition, Ge Hong neglects to provide information on the technical features of the methods. Some details, nevertheless, suggest that the current arrangement of the *Nine Elixirs* results from alterations made either by the

compiler of the *Jiudan jingjue* in the seventh century or by someone before him. In particular, whereas Ge Hong's summary and the other texts on the *Nine Elixirs* describe the two preliminary methods (those for the Mysterious and Yellow, or *xuanhuang* 玄黃, and for the Mud of the Six-and-One, or *liuyi ni* 六一泥) within the section of the First Elixir, these methods are found in a separate section in the *Jiudan jingjue* (after the introduction and before the methods of the *Nine Elixirs*). The three methods in the section on the Second Elixir also may result from later additions, although they are sequentially related to each other.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, besides the features that the *Nine Elixirs* shares with the other Taiqing sources with respect to language, style, techniques, rites, and underlying doctrines, clear evidence on the substantial authenticity of the received text is provided by the *Scripture of the Liquid Pearl*. Its descriptions of the methods are largely the same as those given in the version in the *Jindan jingjue*, with occasional variants consisting of details in the directions given and in a few added or omitted sentences.<sup>16</sup> Many of these variants correspond to those pointed out by the anonymous compiler of the *Jiudan jingjue*, who therefore based his edition of the *Nine Elixirs* on more than one manuscript, one of which was close to the textual lineage witnessed by the present *Liquid Pearl*. This rules out the possibility that the present text of the *Nine Elixirs* was fabricated, or substantially revised, in the seventh century when the nineteen-chapter commentary was compiled.

Concerning Ge Hong's summary of the *Nine Elixirs* in his *Inner Chapters*, an error found in his report of the method for making the Mud of the Six-and-One (*liuyi ni*) is worthy of attention.<sup>17</sup> This portion of Ge Hong's summary reads as follows:

The First Elixir is called Flower of Cinnabar. First make the Mysterious and Yellow. With an aqueous solution of realgar, an aqueous solution of alum, Turkestan salt, lake salt, arsenolite, oyster shells, red clay, talc, and white lead—several dozen ounces of each—make the Mud of the Six-and-One. (*Baopu zi*, 4.74)

The following translation reflects the necessary emendations, based on comparison with the received text of the *Nine Elixirs* in the *Jiudan jingjue* and in the *Liquid Pearl*:

The First Elixir is called Flower of Cinnabar. First make the Mysterious and Yellow with aqueous solutions of realgar and an aqueous solution of cinn-

bar. [Then] with alum, Tur“estan salt, la“e salt, arsenolite, oyster shells, red clay, and talc—several dozen ounces of each—ma“e the Mud of the Six-and-One. [Also use] white lead.<sup>18</sup>

Mista“es in Ge Hong’s summary ma“e it impossible to reconstruct the chemical processes involved in the compounding of the Flower of Cinnabar without recourse to the received text of the *Nine Elixirs*. Ge Hong actually does not provide the method of the Flower of Cinnabar—or of any of the *Nine Elixirs*—but only an inaccurate list of the ingredients of the luting mud.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, Ge Hong briefly mentions the rites performed during the compounding of the *Nine Elixirs*, saying that “one should perform ceremonies for which a separate scroll is available with illustrations and procedures.” The text referred to by Ge Hong is lost, but he writes elsewhere that those who ma“e the elixirs should “set up altars for ceremonies to the Great One (Taiyi 太一), the Mysterious Woman (Xuann 玄女), and Laozi 老子, as is also done during the compounding the Nine Elixirs.”<sup>20</sup> The received version of the *Nine Elixirs* mentions the Mysterious Woman and Laozi (Laojun) in the ceremonies for handing down the text and for “indling the fire, and its commentary describes a rite performed in honor of the Great One.<sup>21</sup>

### *Scripture of the Golden Liquor (Jinye jing 金液經)*

In her *Révélation du Shangqing*, Isabelle Robinet has remar“ed that the recipes found in the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing* 太清金液神丹經 (Scripture of the Divine Elixir of the Golden Liquor of Great Clarity; CT 880) s’inscrivent dans la lign e de celles qui donne Ge Hong” in his *Inner Chapters*.<sup>22</sup> While this remar“ is accurate, the comparison between the summary of the *Golden Liquor* in the *Inner Chapters* and the *Baopu zi shenxian jinzhuo jing* 抱朴子神仙金沟經 (Scripture of the Golden Liquid of the Divine Immortals, by the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature; CT 917) ma“es clear that the latter wor“, and not the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, contains the received text of the original *Golden Liquor* (for a comparison of Ge Hong’s summary and the received text see above, pp. 114–18).

As noted above in Chapter 3, there is no indication that the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*—despite the *Taiqing* prefix in its title, which it shares with many other extant or lost texts—was originally part of the *Taiqing* corpus. The text, however, quotes passages of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* con-

cerned with the preliminary purifications and precepts, the purchase of the ingredients, the favorable and adverse days to begin the compounding, and the method of the mud for luting the crucible. The corresponding passages between the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing* (left) and the *Nine Elixirs* (right) are the following:

1.7a5–7b1	favorable and adverse days (1)	1.2a7–2b3
1.7b1–3	purchase of the ingredients	1.2a5–7
1.7b4–5	favorable and adverse days (2)	1.2a8–9
1.7b5–6	purifications and precepts	1.2a3–5, 1.2b3–5
1.15a2–9, 15b2–5	Mud of the Six-and-One	1.3b7–4a6

Moreover, one of the additional methods described in this wor“ is similar to the method for ma“ing the first of the *Nine Elixirs*.<sup>23</sup> These similarities suggest that while the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing* is not an original Taiqing text, it is partially based on the Taiqing scriptures and particularly on the *Nine Elixirs*.

The first citation of a *Taiqing jinye shendan jing* in three scrolls is found in the *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目 (Complete List [of the Institute] for Venerating Texts; 1042).<sup>24</sup> Some portions (1.1a–3b and 13a–20a, 2.1a–5b) are also included in *j. 65* of the *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Seven Lots from the Boo“case of the Clouds; CT 1032), with the same title as the independent version.

Chen Guofu has suggested that the rhymes of the portions in verses (1.13a10–14b9, and 2.1a3–6) show that the first part of the text (1.1a–2.4b9) dates from the late first century BCE or the early first century CE, and that the second part (2.4b10–3.18a) is of a later date. The reliability of this indication, however, is questionable.<sup>25</sup>

### *Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* (*Jiuzhuan huandan jing* 九轉還丹經)

The third part of the *Essential Instructions on the Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles of the Perfected of the Great Ultimate* (*Taiji zhenren jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue* 太極真人九轉還丹經要訣; CT 889, 6b–8), concerning the five *zhi* 芝 planted by Mao Ying 茅盈 and his brothers on Mount Mao (Maoshan 茅山), is indicated as having been “appended” (*fu* 附) to the main text. Its earlier origin is confirmed by parallel passages in Ge



Hong's *Inner Chapters*, where the accounts of the Triple *zhi* (*cancheng zhi* 參成芝) and the Dragon-Immortality *zhi* (*longxian zhi* 龍仙芝) correspond to those found in the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*.<sup>26</sup> Later, this section in turn was incorporated into the *Shangqing daobao jing* 上清道寶經 (Scripture of Highest Clarity on the Treasures of the Dao) and into the *Maoshan zhi* 茅山志 (Monograph on Mount Mao).<sup>27</sup> It is quoted in the *Wushang biyao* 無上祕要 (The Supreme Secret Essentials) as coming from the now-lost *Daoji jing* 道迹經 (Scripture on the Traces of the Dao).<sup>28</sup>

Planting the *zhi* is also the topic of the *Zhong zhicao fa* 種芝草法 (Methods for Planting the *Zhi* Plants; CT 933). This work, probably dating from the late Six Dynasties, in turn shares passages with another Shangqing text, the *Shangqing mingjian yaojing* 上清明鑑要經 (Essential Scripture of the Bright Mirror of Highest Clarity).<sup>29</sup> It attributes to Laozi the statement that the best *zhi* grow above cinnabar, gold, malachite, and realgar, and teaches how to plant these minerals at the four directions of a mountain on the days of the solstices and the equinoxes so that they produce *zhi* plants.

### Tang Anthologies

Both Tang anthologies of the Taiqing tradition, namely the *Records from the Stone Wall of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing shibi ji* 太清石壁記; CT 881) and Sun Simiao's 孫思邈 *Essential Instructions from the Scripture of the Elixirs of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing danjing yaojue* 太清丹經要訣; in *Yunji qiqian*, j. 71), are likely to derive from one of the extended versions of the *Scripture of Great Clarity* that circulated from the Six Dynasties onward. Among several details that suggest this are the descriptions that the *Records* shares with a Tang text on the materia medica included in the Daoist Canon, the *Instructions on an Inventory of Forty-five Metals and Minerals* (*Jinshi bu wujiu shu jue* 金石簿五九數訣; CT 907). With one exception, the *Records* gives, in a shorter form, the same descriptions found in the *Inventory*, and four of them are also found in Sun Simiao's *Essential Instructions*.

The following translations illustrate the extent of the similarities. The entries in the *Records from the Stone Wall of Great Clarity* concerned with cinnabar, quartz, and hematite read:

Cinnabar (*zhusha* 朱砂) which is lustrous and translucent as a pomegranate is efficacious. (*Taiqing shibi ji*, 3.12b)

It is not important whether quartz (*baishi ying* 白石英) is coarse or fine. Providing it is lustrous, luminous, uncontaminated by flecks both outside and inside, and has the same color as water when immersed in it, it is efficacious. (*Taiqing shibi ji*, 3.12b)

Hematite (*Yu yuliang* 太一禹餘糧) occurs on the mountains in the region of Zezhou 澤州 (Shanxi). It exists in five colors, white, red, yellow, purple, and black. Always use the yellow one, as it is mature and ripe. That which looks like the cat-tail (*puhuang* 蒲黃) is efficacious. That of other colors is definitely not fit. (*Taiqing shibi ji*, 3.13b)

These are the corresponding entries of the *Inventory of Forty-five Metals and Minerals* (passages shared with the *Shibi ji* are in italics):

Cinnabar occurs in Chenzhou 辰州 and Jinzhou 錦州 (Hunan). It is as large as a peach or a jujube. That *which is lustrous, brilliant on all sides, thoroughly bright, and translucent as a pomegranate is efficacious*. If this is not available use the “horse-tooth” (*mayu* 馬牙) variety, the best of which is next in efficacy. Cinnabar that has a heavy purple color is inferior and unsuitable for use. (*Jinshi bu wujiu shu jue*, 1a–b)

Quartz occurs in Shouyang 壽陽 (Shanxi) and in Zezhou (Shanxi). It is found in several different varieties. Choose only that which is *lustrous and devoid of flecks both outside and inside*. Quartz that *has the same color as water when immersed in it* is superior. Whether it is coarse or fine it is suitable. (*Jinshi bu wujiu shu jue*, 2b)

Hematite occurs in Donghai 東海 and Dongyang 東陽 (Shandong), and *on the mountains of Zezhou* (Shanxi). It exists in five varieties, azure, yellow, scarlet, white, and black. Recently, those who use hematite *always choose the yellow one*. That *which looks like the cat-tail is efficacious*. Scarlet hematite is also good, but the best one is that which is white and pure. (*Jinshi bu wujiu shu jue*, 8b–9a)

In addition to those parallel to the *Records*, four other entries in the *Inventory*—those on arsenolite (*yushi* 礬石), selenite (*taiyin xuanjing* 太陰玄精), la“e salt (*luxian* 鹵鹹), and talc (*huashi* 滑石)—contain passages similar to those found in Sun Simiao’s *Essential Instructions*.<sup>30</sup> One of them, concerning selenite, is also found in the *Records from the Stone Wall of Great Clarity*:

I fear that selenite is difficult to come by. You can go to the brine pools in the Jie 解 [district] of Hedong 河東 (Shanxi), where it is picked up near the

water. Its color and patterning are like those characteristic of jade; its shape resembles that of tortoise shells. The type which is heavy and dark is not suitable. The yellowish, transparent, and clean sort is superior.<sup>31</sup> (*Taiqing shibi ji*, 1.7a)

Selenite comes from the brine pools on the border of the Jie district of Hedong, where it is picked out of the water. Its color and patterning are in every respect like that characteristic of jade; its shape resembles that of tortoise shells. The type which is heavy and very dark is not suitable. The yellow, clear sort is superior.<sup>32</sup> (*Taiqing danjing yaojue*, in *Yunji qiqian*, 71.14b)

Selenite occurs in the brine pools of the Jie district of Hedong. As it is the root of salt, it is picked up near the water. Its shape is like that characteristic of jade, while its consistency is similar to that of tortoise shells. Selenite that has a heavy black color is not suitable. That which is yellow and white, clear and pure is superior; it fixes mercury, and transforms it into a powder. [However,] if one tests this selenite against the one that comes from Yanzhou 鹽州 (Gansu/Shenxi), the latter is slightly better. Therefore one knows that selenite from Yanzhou is superior. (*Jinshi bu wujiu shu jue*, 7b)

These textual similarities show that the *Records from the Stone Wall of Great Clarity*, Sun Simiao's *Essential Instructions*, and the *Tang Inventory* all drew their descriptions of minerals from a single source. The association of the former two texts with the *Taiqing* tradition points to one of the enlarged versions of the *Scripture of Great Clarity* as the source in question.<sup>33</sup>

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE  
COMMENTARY TO THE SCRIPTURE  
OF THE NINE ELIXIRS

This appendix contains materials concerning the *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* 黃帝九鼎神丹經訣 (Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor; CT 885, referred to below as *Jiudan jingjue*), the text that includes the primary received version of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*. It provides an outline of the commentary, an analysis of its main sources, and evidence on its date.

*Outline*

1. The first, untitled chapter contains the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*.
2. Elucidations on the Divine Elixirs and the choice of persons of high rank “明神丹之由致取人貴法”

The main themes of this chapter (the first of the commentary proper) are the divine origins of the *Nine Elixirs* and the sovereign's search for the Dao. The ruler should look for enlightened teachers, and will be rewarded by Heaven with the revelation of scriptures and methods. Drawing from different chapters of Ge Hong's *Inner Chapters*, however, the commentary also claims that the mythical rulers of antiquity governed virtuously even without the help of sage counselors; in times of peace, therefore, some masters should be allowed to devote themselves to the study of the Dao instead

of serving at court, with no damage to the country. Moreover, in the same way that a hall adorned with flowers in which one raises an orphan deer becomes a cage for that animal, so also the titles and honors granted to a master are no better for him than forced labor. Those who devote themselves to the Dao, therefore, should be left free to live in retirement.

3. On receiving instructions from a master and not transgressing the rules of the Perfected” 擇明師受訣不藉真人法

This chapter, concerned with the transmission of doctrines and methods, is devoted to the preliminaries to the alchemical work. Since the writings of the literati (*rushu* 儒書) do not contain methods for becoming an immortal, a sovereign should search for them. The methods alone, however, are not enough: one should also receive both the written and the oral instructions (*wenjue* 文訣 and *koujue* 口訣). The main part of this chapter describes the ceremony of transmission of the *Scripture of Great Clarity*, of one unidentified text, and of three lost works attributed to Hugang zi 狐剛子.<sup>1</sup>

4. Elucidations on warding off noxious and evil demons, guarding the spirit, and protecting oneself” 明防辟惡邪魅守神保身  
(See the summary of the next chapter.)

5. Elucidations on the transmutation of cinnabar into a Divine Elixir, necessarily based on its affinities with the Dao” 明朱成神丹必藉資道之緣

The themes of the fourth and fifth chapters are space and time. The practices of immortality nourish both body and spirit (*xingshen* 形神) and offer protection from external harmful influences. Only the elixirs, however, confer immortality. Other practices can merely delay death; they become useless after one compounds the elixirs, but until then one cannot do without them. In the past, deities and beginners of the alchemical traditions (including the Yellow Emperor and Zuo Ci 左慈) retired to the mountains to practice these techniques. Chapter 4 deals with retirement (*rushan* 入山, entering the mountain”) and expounds methods for choosing auspicious times. Chapter 5, despite its title, is not concerned with the compounding of elixirs but with methods for expelling the demons that one can meet during the retirement, and for delimiting and protecting space with talismans (*fu* 符).<sup>2</sup> Almost all identifiable quotations in both chapters come from chapter 17 of Ge Hong's *Inner Chapters*. Portions of chapters 19 and 20 of the *Jiudan jingjue* also are concerned with the same topics.

6. Elucidations on the efficacy of the Divine Elixirs and the search for beneficial practices” 明神丹功能求皆有益之道

This chapter is closely related in content to chapter 10. Both chapters deal with some of the principles that govern the preparation of the elixirs.

There are no practices higher than the alchemical ones: the scriptures say that the superior methods do not consist of offerings and ceremonies to deities and spirits but of ma“ing the elixirs. It is wrong, however, to assume that one might compound the elixirs merely by following the written methods, since the main practices are not transmitted in writing. This is why the compounding is often unsuccessful; and even if the elixir is achieved, ingesting it will be ineffective unless it is accompanied by inner cultivation. The principles of Yin and Yang provide the ultimate basis of the alchemical work. Yin is lead and Yang is cinnabar.<sup>3</sup> Lead and cinnabar, in turn, are comparable to Heaven and Earth, from which the ten thousand beings are generated by transformation.

7. Elucidations on guarding the One and warding off evil, on the crucibles, the tripods, and the Chamber of the Elixirs” 明守一閉邪及釜鼎丹屋

After a brief introduction on the relation between alchemy and meditation, this chapter is mostly devoted to the laboratory and to methods for ma“ing and luting the crucible.

8. Elucidations on the transmutation of minerals into aqueous solutions and on methods for liquefying minerals” 明化石爲水并硝石法

This chapter describes procedures for ma“ing aqueous solutions, most of which are quoted from the *Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions* (*Sansbilu shuifa* 三十六水法). In particular, this chapter explains how to ma“e the solutions of realgar and cinnabar used in the method of the Mysterious and Yellow (*xuanhuang* 玄黃) of the *Nine Elixirs*.<sup>4</sup> The author of the *Jiudan jingjue* remarks that all these methods require saltpeter (*xiaoshi* 硝石) and Tur“estan salt (*rongyan* 戎鹽). Saltpeter, however, was unavailable at his time. While the “common people” (*suren* 谷人) ma“e aqueous solutions without saltpeter or replace it with other ingredients, he deems these methods to be inefficacious.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, he describes several methods for replacing unavailable substances in a separate section of this chapter, apart from the correct ones.<sup>6</sup>

9. Elucidations on using good and bad varieties of gold and silver and on methods for refining them before ingestion” 明用金銀善惡服鍊方法

This chapter begins the portion of the *Jiudan jingjue* devoted to the substances used as elixir ingredients. Chapter 9, which is largely based on Hugang zi’s *Chu jinkuang tulu* 出金礦圖錄 (Illustrated Records on the Extraction of Gold from its Ores), is concerned with the first pair of substances, native gold (*jin* 金, or *huangjin* 黃金) and silver (*yin* 銀).<sup>7</sup> The main methods described here are those for the extraction of two varieties each of gold and silver from their ores.<sup>8</sup>

10. Elucidations on the interdictions for refining the Medicines and on fixing the ingredients according to Yin and Yang” 明鍊藥禁慎陰陽制

The description of the elixir ingredients is interrupted by this chapter that deals with general principles of the alchemical work. Its content is closely related to chapter 6 (see the summary above).

11. Elucidations on the use of quicksilver to obtain long life and on the art of removing its toxicity through refining” 明水銀長生及調鍊去毒之術

(See the summary of the next chapter.)

12. On the method for compounding the Lead of the Nine Cycles and on the efficacy of lead” 合九丹鉛法鉛力功能

The second pair of substances featured in the *Jiudan jingjue* are mercury (*shuiyin* 水銀, or *hong* 汞) and lead (*qian* 鉛). Chapters 11 and 12 describe several complementary methods drawn from two of Hugang zi's lost works, the *Fu xuanzhu jue* 伏玄珠訣 (Instructions for Fixing the Mysterious Pearl) and the *Wujin fen tujue* 五金粉圖訣 (Illustrated Instructions on the Powders of the Five Metals). The lead and mercury spoken of here are not the two native metals but their alchemical correlates: the Essence of Lead (*qianjing* 鉛精, also called *danqian* 丹鉛 or Elixir Lead, and *qiandan* 鉛丹 or Lead Elixir) and the Mysterious Pearl (*xuanzhu* 玄珠), which are obtained by refining native lead and cinnabar, respectively.<sup>9</sup> The method for making alchemical mercury is described as Hugang zi's Method for Fixing Quick-silver (Hugang zi fu shuiyin fa” 狐剛子伏水銀法). The corresponding process for the essence of Lead is Hugang zi's Method for Making the Lead Elixir in Nine Cycles (Hugang zi zuo jiuzhuan qiandan fa” 狐剛子作九傳鉛丹法). The two processes culminate in the Method of the Elixir-Lead in Nine Cycles and the Mysterious Pearl (Jiu danqian xuanzhu fa” 九丹鉛玄珠法), outlined in an identical way in both chapters.<sup>10</sup> The product of the conjunction of the pure essences of Yin and Yang has no name, but is equivalent to the Mysterious and Yellow of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*; like the Mysterious and Yellow, moreover, one can place it in a crucible above and below the ingredients of an elixir.<sup>11</sup> These methods come from the *Fu xuanzhu jue*. Other complementary processes are those for making three elixirs based on mercury or lead. With the first, one can rise to heaven, with the second, one obtains power over gods and demons, and with the third, one can transmute other metals. These methods come from the *Wujin fen tujue*.<sup>12</sup>

13. Elucidations on the efficacy of cinnabar and its use in the practices of long life” 明丹砂功力能入長生之道用

This chapter begins with a passage describing the properties of cinnabar (*dansha* 丹砂), and continues with methods for its refining and ingestion.

The more cinnabar is submitted to cyclical refining (*zhuan* 轉), the more wondrous are its transmutations.”<sup>13</sup> Cinnabar, which is red outside, contains a white substance inside, which is mercury”; this is the *hun* 魂 (the celestial soul”) of cinnabar, its volatile essence, which a large number of methods instruct how to refine (*lian* 煉) and fix (*zhi* 治, or *fu* 伏) in order to avoid its loss when cinnabar is heated. Alchemical mercury then can be joined to alchemical lead to make an elixir that incorporates the pure essences of Yin and Yang; or it can be combined with sulphur and sublimated again to obtain—usually after seven or nine cycles of refining—a pure and luminous essence. These are the two fundamental *waidan* 外丹 practices.<sup>14</sup> Chapter 13 opens with a reminder that ingesting cinnabar is dangerous for those who do not “now the correct methods: mercury comes from cinnabar, and if the branches are poisonous, how can the root be not poisonous itself?” Part of this chapter, accordingly, gives methods for removing the toxicity of cinnabar, followed by other methods for its ingestion as the single ingredient of an elixir. The final part of the introduction hints at the method for transmuting cinnabar into gold that Li Shaojun taught Emperor Wu of the Han. One should not marvel at this transmutation, says the *Jiudan jingjue*, for when there is cinnabar at the foot of a mountain, gold will often be found above it.<sup>15</sup>

14. Elucidations on the methods for refining realgar” 明鍊雄黃法

In this chapter, an introduction to the properties of realgar (*xionghuang* 雄黃) is followed by several methods for refining and ingesting it. A short final section is devoted to orpiment (*cihuang* 雌黃), which forms with realgar another pair of Yin-Yang substances.

15. Elucidations on the numinous nature of various minerals” 明諸石藥之精靈

This chapter is concerned with sulphur (*shi liuhuang* 石流黃) and with three varieties of malachite: laminar (*cengqing* 曾青), nodular (*kongqing* 空青), and granular (*shilu* 石碌). It describes their pharmacological features, medicinal properties, places of origin, and methods of refining.

16. Elucidations on refining various minerals and their use in obtaining a long life” 明鍊諸石由致皆有長生之用

This chapter deals with magnetite (*cishi* 磁石), arsenolite (*yushi* 礬石), alum (*fanshi* 礬石), mirabilite (*puxiao* 朴硝), epsomite (*mangxiao* 芒硝), and the stone spleen” (*shipi* 石脾).<sup>16</sup>



17. Elucidations on the use of vinegar for compounding the medicines and on the Flowery Pond” 明事藥先後酢及華池由致

Besides the Flowery Pond (*huachi* 華池), this chapter describes methods for making the Mysterious and Yellow and a similar compound called Mysterious and White (*xuanbai* 玄白).<sup>17</sup>

18. Elucidations on stalactites and other minerals, on various metals, and on their use to obtain a long life” 明鍾乳等石及諸銅鐵由致皆有長生之用

Short descriptions of stalactites (*zhongru* 鍾乳), amethyst (*zishi ying* 紫石英), red hematite (*daizhe* 代赭), lae salt (*luxian* 鹵鹹), Turkestan salt (*rongyan* 戎鹽), minium (*qiandan* 鉛丹), white lead (*hufen* 胡粉), and native lead (*qian* 鉛) are followed in this chapter by methods for refining native lead, copper (*tong* 銅), brass (*yushi* 鑰石), iron (*tie* 鐵), pewter (*baila* 白蠟), and tin (*xi* 錫).

19. Elucidations on removing the toxicity of copper, iron, and brass to use them as ingredients, and on methods for warding off evil influences during the alchemical work” 明鍊銅鐵石等毒入用和合事防辟法

After describing more methods for refining copper, iron, and brass, this chapter deals with various aqueous solutions. Some talismans are reproduced at the end.

20. Elucidations on interdictions, taboos, calamities, and adversities during the compounding of the elixirs” 明合丹忌諱敗畏訣

The final chapter of the *Jiudan jingjue* is devoted to taboos, interdictions, and ceremonies to be performed while compounding the elixirs. Moreover, it reproduces some talismans, contains the text of the “Secret Written Instructions on the Elixirs of the Nine Tripods,” and ends with directions for opening the crucible, testing the elixirs, and ingesting them.<sup>18</sup>

## Main Sources

*Baopu zi neipian* 抱朴子內篇 (Inner Chapters of the Book of the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature). The title of Ge Hong’s work never appears in the *Jiudan jingjue*, but the *Inner Chapters* is the source of several passages in chapters 2, 4, 5, and 6 concerning the general features of alchemical practice, the choice of the time to begin one’s retirement and purifications, and the protection of ritual space. The systematic recourse to Ge Hong’s work is explained by the compiler’s wish to offer Emperor Gaozong easily understandable instructions on alchemy. On the other hand,

with one possible exception, the absence of alchemical methods quoted from this wor“ is conspicuous.<sup>19</sup>

*Works by Hugang zi* 狐剛子. The *Jiudan jingjue* is the main source of fragments from wor“s attributed to Hugang zi, who is associated with several lost texts and represents a lineage based in southeastern China.<sup>20</sup> The commentary ma“es it possible to partially reconstruct the contents of five wor“s belonging to this corpus. The first is the *Fu xuanzhu jue* 伏玄珠訣 (Instructions for Fixing the Mysterious Pearl). Based on passages quoted in the commentary, this wor“ contained methods centered on the refining of mercury and its conjunction to refined lead. Among other methods are those for compounding the Mysterious Pearl with gold and silver, for fixing it, and for removing its toxicity, as well as for dissolving alum and for ma“ing the Vinegar of the Three Cycles (*sanzhuan zuowei* 三轉左味).<sup>21</sup>

The second wor“ attributed to Hugang zi is the *Wujin fen tujue* 五金粉圖訣 (Illustrated Instructions on the Powders of the Five Metals). This text seems to have been based on methods for ma“ing alloys of any two of the Five Metals (gold, silver, copper, tin, and iron), and for compounding each of the Five Metals with mercury and each of the Three Yellows (*sanhuang* 三黃, i.e., realgar, orpiment, and arsenic). The *Jiudan jingjue* quotes methods for ma“ing three types of mercury and three types of lead. Another passage concerns the ceremony of transmission.<sup>22</sup>

According to a statement in the *Jiudan jingjue*,<sup>23</sup> most methods in chapter 9, dealing with gold and silver, come from a third wor“ by Hugang zi, the *Chu jinkuang tulu* 出金礦圖錄 (Illustrated Records on the Extraction of Gold from Its Ores).

The fourth wor“, the *Wanjin jue* 萬金訣 (Instructions Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold), is the source of the Method of the Flowery Pond That Fixes Mercury (Fu hong huachi fa” 伏汞華池法), which uses the above-mentioned Vinegar of the Three Cycles. The *Jiudan jingjue* also includes a short passage on the ceremony of transmission of this text.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, the fifth wor“ is the *Heche jing* 河車經 (Scripture of the River Chariot), named after a lead-based compound that one places in the crucible as the upper and lower layers during the preparation of the elixirs. The *Shiyao eryl* 石藥爾雅 (Synonymic Dictionary of Materia Medica) gives the names of the eight “inds of River Chariot and mentions a *Heche jing*.<sup>25</sup> The methods are lost, but references to the River Chariot in a passage of the *Jiudan jingjue* concerned with the Eight Methods for Dissolving the Stones

TABLE 6

*Passages of the Jiudan jingjue quoted from the Bencao jing jizhu.*

saltpeter ( <i>xiaoshi</i> 硝石)	8.10a-b
epsomite ( <i>mangxiao</i> 芒硝)	8.11a-b and 16.7b-8a
mirabilite ( <i>puxiao</i> 朴硝)	8.11b and 16.5a-6a
quic“silver ( <i>shuiyin</i> 水銀)	11.2a-b
cinnabar ( <i>dansha</i> 丹砂)	13.2b-3b
realgar ( <i>xionghuang</i> 雄黃)	14.1b-2a
orpiment ( <i>cihuang</i> 雌黃)	14.6b-7a
sulphur ( <i>shi liuhuang</i> 石流黃)	15.1b-2b
laminar malachite ( <i>cengqing</i> 曾青)	15.3a-b
nodular malachite ( <i>kongqing</i> 空青)	15.5a-b
granular malachite ( <i>shilu</i> 石碌)	15.6a
magnetite ( <i>cishi</i> 磁石)	16.1a-b
arsenolite ( <i>yushi</i> 礬石)	16.2a-3a
alum ( <i>fanshi</i> 礬石)	16.3b-4b
stalactites ( <i>zhongru</i> 鍾乳)	18.1a-2a
amethyst ( <i>zishi ying</i> 紫石英)	18.3a-b
red hematite ( <i>daizhe</i> 代赭)	18.4a
la“e salt ( <i>luxian</i> 鹵鹹)	18.4a-b
Tur“estan salt ( <i>rongyan</i> 戎鹽)	18.4b-5a
minium ( <i>qiandan</i> 鉛丹)	18.5a

(Bazhong xiaoshi fa” 八種硝石法) seem to imply that these methods are related to the *Heche jing*. The *Jiudan jingjue* quotes four of these Eight Methods, concerned with the preparation of saltpeter, epsomite, “stone spleen” (*shipi*, i.e., la“e salt), and Tur“estan salt. All of them deal with the substitution of compounds of other ingredients for unavailable substances.<sup>26</sup>

*Bencao jing jizhu* 本草經集注 (Collected Commentaries to the Canonical Pharmacopoeia). While the introductory chapters of the *Jiudan jingjue* mostly consist of quotations from the *Inner Chapters*, and the lost wor“s of Hugang zi are the main identifiable sources for its alchemical methods, the descriptions of the ingredients come almost entirely from Tao Hongjing’s 陶弘景 *Bencao jing jizhu*, dating from ca. 500 CE. This wor“ is the source of passages that describe properties, places of origin, and varieties of the twenty minerals listed in Table 6. Although the *Jiudan jingjue* is only available in a relatively late edition (the Daoist Canon of 1445), these passages deserve attention as the *Jiudan jingjue* is, with the *Xinxiu bencao* 新修本草 (Newly Revised Pharmacopoeia) of 659 CE, one of the earliest sources to contain quotations from Tao Hongjing’s wor“.

*Other sources.* Besides those mentioned above, the *Jiudan jingjue* draws from several other sources, both extant and lost. Thirteen methods for the aqueous solution of eight minerals (alum, realgar, cinnabar, saltpeter, sulphur, salt, orpiment, and magnetite) in chapters 8 and 19 come from the

*Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions (Sanshiliu shuifa)*.<sup>27</sup> Passages concerning the ceremony of transmission, the Medicine for Expelling the Demons (*quegui yao* 却鬼藥), the preparation of the crucible, the Mysterious and White, and the Flowery Pond derive from the *Scripture of Great Clarity* and its *Oral Instructions*.<sup>28</sup> The description of the rite performed on the first day of the purification practices and a Method for Testing the Medicines (*shiyao fa* 試藥法), are quoted from a source simply called “Method of the Nine Cycles” ( *Jiuzhuan fa*” 九轉法) in one case and “Nine Cycles” ( *Jiuzhuan*” 九轉) in the other. Both come from the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles*.<sup>29</sup> Two passages concerning the laboratory and the stove are also found in the *Flower of Langgan*.<sup>30</sup>

## Date

Like most other Chinese alchemical texts, the *Jiudan jingjue* gives no explicit indication of its date. Unlike other documents, however, it contains many relevant indications that should be examined both individually and in relation to each other. The issue of dating is further complicated by the different dates suggested in the past by several scholars, sometimes with no illustration of the criteria on which they were based.

### EARLIER VIEWS

The first reference to the date of the *Jiudan jingjue* by a modern scholar is found in Cao Yuanyu’s study of the alchemical instruments, published in 1933.<sup>31</sup> Cao dated the commentary to the beginning of the seventh century without elaborating further. Slightly more than two decades later, Joseph Needham and his collaborators defined the *Jiudan jingjue* as “an alchemical compendium of Thang [Tang] or Sung [Song] date.” This suggestion also was not supported by any evidence, and neither was the suggestion given later by Needham that the text dates from the early Tang or the early Song period. Finally, Needham indicated the seventh century as the likely date of composition.<sup>32</sup>

The first author to support his dating with some details was Chen Guofu, who in 1963 indicated a compilation in the Tang period based on the place names cited in the text and the mention of Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536).<sup>33</sup> Both Wang Kui’e and Zhang Zigao accepted Chen’s suggestion.<sup>34</sup> A few years later, Nathan Sivin defined the text as “a Sung treatise.”<sup>35</sup> More

recently, Zhao Kuanghua dated the *Jiudan jingjue* to the beginning of the Tang period, and a Tang date was also suggested by Meng Naichang and by Ho Peng Yo“e.<sup>36</sup> Another scholar, Zhu Sheng, assigned the composition of the wor“ to the reign period of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 of the Tang (r. 649–83) but, oddly, pointed to Hugang zi 狐剛子 as its author.<sup>37</sup>

Other studies by Nathan Sivin and Chen Guofu provide more evidence in support of the dating that they suggest. In a study published in 1980, Sivin indicates a date in the early Song based on the occurrence of the place name Yizhou 益州, which the *Jiudan jingjue* mentions as a contemporary source of a variety of alum.<sup>38</sup> Sivin notes that, according to a Sichuan geographical monograph published in 1730, the name Yizhou was used only during the years ca. 620–27, 977–88, and 994–1001. Sivin notes, moreover, that the late Tang and most of the Song periods are ruled out by a passage of the *Jiudan jingjue* that alludes to the contemporary conditions of peace in the empire.<sup>39</sup>

In a study published in 1983, Chen Guofu identifies the *Xinxiu bencao* 新修本草 (Newly Revised Pharmacopoeia; 659), instead of the *Bencao jing jizhu*, as the source of the descriptions of minerals given in the *Jiudan jingjue*.<sup>40</sup> Chen notes that after a quotation concerning cinnabar, the anonymous author of the *Jiudan jingjue* states that, in his own time, the best samples of that mineral came from the Mayang 麻陽 district of Chenzhou 辰州.<sup>41</sup> The Tang administration established the district of Mayang in 620, and founded the prefecture of Jinzhou 錦州 in the same area in 686. Since the *Jiudan jingjue* mentions Mayang instead of Jinzhou, Chen Guofu concludes that the *Jiudan jingjue* dates from between 659 (date of the *Xinxiu bencao*) and 686 (date of founding of Jinzhou).<sup>42</sup>

The evidence provided by Sivin and Chen Guofu is examined below as part of the available details on the date of the *Jiudan jingjue*.

#### EVIDENCE FOR DATING THE *JIUDAN JINGJUE*

*Mentions in bibliographies.* The first mention of the *Jiudan jingjue* in a bibliographic wor“ is found in the *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目 (Complete List [of the Institute] for Venerating Texts), the catalogue of the Song Imperial Library submitted to the throne in 1042 and extant in a version of 1144. The *Huangdi jiu ding shendan jingjue* is listed there as a wor“ in ten *juan*.<sup>43</sup> The bibliographic monograph of the *Songshi* 宋史 (History of the Song Dynasty), completed in 1345, also indicates ten *juan*.<sup>44</sup> The *Huangdi jiu ding*

*shendan jingjue* is mentioned as a wor“ in twenty *juan* in the only other reference found in a major pre-modern bibliography, namely Zheng Qiao’s 鄭樵 *Tongzhi* 通志 (Comprehensive History of the Institutions), which dates from 1161.<sup>45</sup>

There is no reason to assume that the difference between ten or twenty *juan* in the above bibliographies reflects an enlargement of the *Jiudan jingjue* between 1042 and 1161. The difference is merely owed to the fact that, in the copy of the Song Imperial Library, each *juan* contained the transcription of two *juan* of the current text. Traces of this arrangement are found in the *Daozang* 道藏 (Daoist Canon) edition of the *Jiudan jingjue*. Although this edition is divided into twenty *juan*, all odd-numbered chapters still bear a note saying that they include the next *juan*.<sup>46</sup> The mention of the *Jiudan jingjue* in the *Chongwen zongmu*, therefore, establishes the year 1042 as a first *terminus ad quem* for its date.

*Citations of texts.* The *Jiudan jingjue* contains several dozen passages quoted from identifiable sources, and cites several other wor“s. Among them, the latest wor“ the date of which is “nown is Tao Hongjing’s *Bencao jing jizhu*, written in 500 CE or shortly thereafter. The *Jiudan jingjue*, thus, was not compiled before 500 CE.

*Names of person.* Besides names of deities, immortals, and mythical emperors, the *Jiudan jingjue* mentions about thirty names of persons, including some historical rulers. I have been unable to ascertain the identity of a Pengjun 彭君 (Lord Peng, unli“ely to be the legendary immortal Pengzu 彭祖), credited with a wor“ quoted in the *Jiudan jingjue* with no indication of its title.<sup>47</sup> Among the other persons, the most recent one is Tao Hongjing.<sup>48</sup> This confirms that the *Jiudan jingjue* was written after the beginning of the sixth century.

*Measures of weight and volume.* The use of measures of weight and volume also provides useful indications for dating the *Jiudan jingjue*. The units of weight mentioned in the *Jiudan jingjue* are the *jin* 斤 and the unit immediately lower, the *liang* 兩 (1/16 of a *jin*). The units of volume are the *dou* 斗, the *sheng* 升 (1/10 of a *dou*), and, occasionally, the *shi* 石 (10 *dou*). The lac“ of references to units of weight lower than the *liang* does not provide evidence on whether the text dates from after 992, when the *qian* 錢 replaced the *fen* 分 as the unit below the *liang*. Of value, however, is the single mention of the “great *sheng*” 大升 (*dasheng*, corresponding to 3 *sheng*), a unit introduced in the Tang period.<sup>49</sup> This shows that the *Jiudan jingjue* does

not date from before the Tang, raising by one century the *terminus a quo* established by the means of the previous criteria.

*Place names.* As the *Jiudan jingjue* was addressed to an emperor, it might be expected that the author too“ care to mention place names currently in official use. At least in principle, therefore, the evidence of place names is especially important for dating the *Jiudan jingjue*. This is even more true since, in five instances, the places of provenance of a mineral are given with the indication that those were the contemporary sites of occurrence. At the time the *Jiudan jingjue* was compiled, cinnabar occurred in the Mayang 麻陽 district of Chenzhou 辰州; laminar malachite in Yuzhou 蔚州, Lanzhou 蘭州, Zizhou 梓州, and Yizhou 宜州; magnetite in Xiangzhou 相州; and alum in Maozhou, which is within the commandery of Yizhou” 茂州乃益州管內.<sup>50</sup>

The prefectures of Zizhou (in present-day Sichuan) and Xiangzhou (Henan) were established in 618 (Wude 武德 1).<sup>51</sup> The prefectures of Lanzhou (Gansu), Yizhou 宜州 (Anhui), Ezhou (Hubei), and Yuzhou (Shanxi) were established in 619 (Wude 2), 620 (Wude 3), 621 (Wude 4), and 623 (Wude 6), respectively.<sup>52</sup> The Mayang district was established in Chenzhou (Hunan) in 620 or 621 (Wude 3 or 4), but became part of Jinzhou 錦州 (Hunan) in 686 (Chuigong 2).<sup>53</sup> Since the *Jiudan jingjue* mentions Mayang as a district of Chenzhou, the useful dates are those included between 623 and 686.

The details concerning the place of occurrence of alum must be examined separately. The geographical treatise of the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Ancient History of the Tang Dynasty) states that the prefecture of Yizhou 益州 (Sichuan) had this name between 618 and 742.<sup>54</sup> This contrasts with Sivin's suggestion that, during the Tang, the prefecture was so named only between 620 and 627. In fact, at least two other editions of the Sichuan local monograph quoted by Sivin mention 627 as the year in which Yizhou became the seat of the Jiannan Circuit (Jiannan dao 劍南道), with no indication that this administrative change entailed a change of its name.<sup>55</sup> This is confirmed by the geographical treatise of the *Jiu Tangshu*, which mentions Yizhou four more times with reference to years later than 627: in one instance 677 (Yifeng 2), and in three instances 686 (Chuigong 2).<sup>56</sup>

The place names mentioned above, therefore, were simultaneously adopted in the official toponymy of the Chinese empire only between 623 (when the prefecture of Yuzhou was established) and 686 (when the district of Mayang became part of the new prefecture of Jinzhou).

*Tabooed characters.* A final test concerns tabooed characters. The circumstances make this another particularly favorable criterion, as it is possible to compare several quotations with a source for which a full concordance is available, namely, the *Inner Chapters* of Ge Hong's *Book of the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature* (*Baopu zi neipian*).

For this analysis, I have examined the thirty-five characters that are part of the personal names of all Tang and Northern Sung emperors. The comparison yields clear indications. The character *shi* 世, which is part of Taizong's 太宗 (r. 626–49) personal name, is replaced by other characters in five of its seven occurrences in passages quoted from Ge Hong's work.<sup>57</sup> The character *min* 民, also part of Taizong's personal name, is replaced in its three occurrences.<sup>58</sup> The character *zhi* 治, part of Gaozong's 高宗 (r. 649–83) personal name, appears eleven times in passages of the *Inner Chapters* quoted in the *Jiudan jingjue*; it is replaced in seven cases, omitted in three, and preserved only in one.<sup>59</sup> Altogether, these three characters are omitted or replaced in eighteen of twenty-one occurrences in passages quoted from the *Inner Chapters*.

*Zhi* 治, however, appears nine times in the text of *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*. Four of these occurrences can be accounted for by the fact that in the received versions of alchemical and pharmacological texts this character is sometimes an error for *ye* 冶, a graph that occurs in classical and modern Chinese mainly in the sense of "melting (a metal)," but originally meant "to pulverize (a mineral)."<sup>60</sup> In this sense, either alone or in compounds (with *dao* 搗 or *tiao* 調), *zhi* appears four times in the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*.<sup>61</sup> In five other occurrences, instead, the same word is used in the sense of "compounding (an elixir)."<sup>62</sup>

Despite this inconsistency, the eight instances of substitution, out of ten occurrences in quotations from the *Inner Chapters*, of the two characters that formed Taizong's personal name, and the ten instances of substitution or omission, out of eleven occurrences, of the character that was Gaozong's personal name suggest that the *Jiudan jingjue* was written during Gaozong's reign, i.e., between 649 and 683.

#### CONCLUSION

The evidence yielded by the above analysis is coherent. The citations of texts and names of persons indicate a date of compilation after 500; the mentions in bibliographies show that the *Jiudan jingjue* was compiled before 1042;



and the measures of weight and volume suggest a Tang or later date. With much more accuracy, the place names show that the *Jiudan jingjue* dates from between 623 and 686, while the tabooed characters further restrict the time span during which the *Jiudan jingjue* was written to between 649 and 683, the dates of Gaozong's reign. Three references to the conditions of peace that prevailed at that time in the empire confirm this dating.<sup>63</sup>

A final detail is worthy of attention. The sites of occurrence of laminar and nodular malachite given in the *Jiudan jingjue* correspond almost verbatim to those found in the *Xinxiu bencao*, the pharmacopoeia compiled on imperial order in 659.<sup>64</sup> Although the shared details concern only these substances, they raise two questions. If—as Chen Guofu has maintained—those indications come indeed from the *Xinxiu bencao*, why did the author of the *Jiudan jingjue* quote only the entries on the two varieties of malachite from this pharmacopoeia, and not those on the other eighteen minerals that he described in his work?<sup>65</sup> Could the details shared by the *Jiudan jingjue* and the *Xinxiu bencao* derive from a third common source, or could it even be the *Xinxiu bencao* that actually draws those details from the *Jiudan jingjue*, and not vice versa?

These questions cannot be answered at present, but neither bears any major consequence on the dating suggested above. If the *Xinxiu bencao* is among the sources of the *Jiudan jingjue*, the *Jiudan jingjue* was written between 659 (instead of 649) and 683. If the *Jiudan jingjue* is among the sources of the *Xinxiu bencao*, the *Jiudan jingjue* was written in the early years of Gaozong's reign, between 649 and 659. The partial similarities with the *Xinxiu bencao* do, nevertheless, raise the possibility that an alchemical and a pharmacological compendium were compiled at the same time as part of a single undertaking sponsored by the imperial court.

## NOTES

### *Introduction*

1. The main study of the cosmological tradition of *waidan* is found in Sivin, "The Theoretical Background of Elixir Alchemy." On correlative cosmology see especially Kalinowski, *Cosmologie et divination dans la Chine ancienne: Le Compendium des Cinq Agents*. Virtually all texts that document the use of correlative cosmology in *waidan* are related to the *Zhouyi cantong qi* (To "en for the Agreement of the Three According to the *Book of Changes*). The earliest known mention of this seminal work in association with *waidan* dates from around 500 CE; see Pregadio, "The Early History of the *Zhouyi cantong qi*," 157, and Chapter 12 of the present book.

2. Ho Peng Yo, *On the Dating of Taoist Alchemical Texts*; Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 285–381. On this and related issues in the study of Chinese alchemy see also Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy: Preliminary Studies*, 11–34; and his "The Theoretical Background of Elixir Alchemy," 210–12.

3. A list of *waidan* sources that bear reliable dates, or that can be dated with reasonable accuracy by internal or external evidence, is found in Appendix A. Surveys of the *waidan* corpus include Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 50–220; Zhao Kuanghua, *Zhongguo liandan shu*; Meng Naichang, *Daojiao yu Zhongguo liandan shu*, 41–117; and the relevant entries in Ren Jiyu and Zhong Zhaopeng, *Daozang tiyao*. For the main data, and for references to these and other studies, see Pregadio, "Elixirs and Alchemy," 172–79.

4. See below, Chapter 7. Overviews of the *Inner Chapters* are available in Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*, 78–113; Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 18–97; and Hu Fuchen, *Wei-Jin shenxian daojiao*. The main study of its alchemical content is now Kim Daeyeol, "Le symbolisme de la force vitale en Chine ancienne: Modèles et significations dans l'alchimie taoïste opératoire."

5. See *Baopu zi*, chapters 4 and 16 (trans. Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of A.D. 320*, 68–96 and 261–78), respectively. The statement concerning the ritual features of the two sets of texts is found in 16.283 (trans. Ware, 261).

6. *Baopu zi*, 4.78–82 (trans. Ware, 83–89). In addition to those belonging to the three main Taiqing scriptures, chapter 4 of Ge Hong’s work also contains quotations of other methods originally found in other texts. See Kim,

“Le symbolisme de la force vitale en Chine ancienne,” especially chapter 7; and Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 90–97.

7. On the three main Taiqing texts and their present versions in the Daoist Canon see below, Chapter 3. The *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* and the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* are translated in Chapter 9 and Chapter 10, respectively.

8. On the other accounts of the transmission of the Taiqing corpus see below, Chapter 8.

9. *Baopu zi*, 4.71 (trans. Ware, 70).

10. See, for instance, Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion*, 69; and Honda Wataru, “Hōbo‘ushi,’” 25. I also mentioned Shandong as the area of origin of the Taiqing tradition in my “Elixirs and Alchemy”; this information should be amended in the light of the evidence provided below.

11. On the shifting locations of the southern sacred mountain at different times in Chinese history see Robson, “The Polymorphous Space of the Southern Marchmount.” Robson (to whom I am grateful for discussing this topic with me at length) shows that the appellation of Nanyue, or Southern Pea, referred to Mount Heng (Hengshan, in present-day Hunan) before Han Wudi (r. 141–87 BCE) bestowed this title on Mount Qian (or Tianzhu). Several centuries later, Sui Yangdi (r. 604–17) officially restored the title to Mount Heng.

12. On the *fangshi* see Ngo Van Xuyet, *Divination, magie et politique*; and DeWos “in, *Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians of Ancient China*. On their relation to alchemy see below in the present chapter, and Chapter 1.

13. The Six Decades are related to the Hidden Stems (*dunjia*) method of divination; see Ngo, *Divination, magie et politique*, 190–95; Kalinowsky, “*Cosmologie et divination dans la Chine ancienne*, 87–88 and 384–87; and Schipper and Wang, “Progressive and Regressive Time Cycles in Taoist Ritual,” 198–204. “Traveling Cuisine” denotes a banquet of supernatural foods offered to the adept by the gods; see Mollier, “*Les cuisines de Laozi et du Buddha*.”

14. For a full translation of Zuo Ci’s biography in the *Shenxian zhuan* see Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 279. The account in the *Hou Hanshu* (History of the Later Han Dynasty), 82B.2747–48, is translated by Ngo, *Divination, magie et politique*, 138–39. On Zuo Ci’s role in the later Daoist tradition see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du taoïsme*, 1: 9–24 passim. Sources on Zuo Ci, Ge Xuan, and Zheng Yin are collated in Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 90–95.

15. On Ge Xuan see Bo “encompassing,” “Sources of the Ling-pao Scriptures,” 436–42, and Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 152–59.

16. Ge Hong, who studied under Zheng Yin when he was aged fourteen to nineteen, devotes a lengthy evocative passage to his master in *Baopu zi*, 19.331–33 (trans. Ware, 310–13).

17. *Jiudan jingjue* (= *Huangdi jinding shendan jingjue*; CT 885), 1.1A; see

also *Baopu zi*, 4.70 (trans. Ware, 68–69). On the relation of alchemy to other practices see below, Chapter 7.

18. On Shangqing Daoism see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, and the brief survey in her “Shangqing: Highest Clarity.”

19. On the *Huangting jing* and its relation to Shangqing Daoism see Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 55–96, and her *La révélation du Shangqing*, 2: 253–57. Most scholars agree that the incorporation of the *Huangting jing* into the Shangqing corpus resulted in the creation of a new version of this text, now “nown as Inner” (Nei”), that expanded an earlier—and also still extant—version, now “nown as Outer” (Wai”).

20. On the two texts see Chapter 3. The relation of Shangqing to *waidan* and the Taiqing tradition is examined in more detail below in Chapter 8. Other Shangqing materials on *waidan* (see note 7 to Chapter 8) are witness to a brand of alchemy different from the texts mentioned above. It should be noted that the list of secret names of elixir ingredients given in the *Scripture of the Elixir Flower of Langgan* does not match the nomenclature used in the three main Taiqing scriptures. These names—some of which allude to Shangqing doctrinal notions; see Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 292–93 and 334—correspond, instead, to those given in another Shangqing *waidan* method apparently unrelated to the Taiqing tradition, found in the *Shangqing Taishang Dijun jiu zhen zhongjing* (Central Scripture of the Nine Perfected of the Most High Imperial Lord of Highest Clarity; CT 1376), 2.8b–22b. The list found in the latter text is longer, which suggests that the secret names in the *Elixir Flower of Langgan* were drawn from it when this wor“ was incorporated into the Shangqing corpus.

21. On the later Taiqing texts see Chapter 3 and Appendixes B and C.

22. Sivin, “The Theoretical Background of Elixir Alchemy,” 220.

23. The “theoretical” and “technological” tendencies constitute the two sides of the spectrum of alchemy according to the definition given by Nathan Sivin in his essay cited above (“The Theoretical Background of Elixir Alchemy,” 220–21). This definition has proven exceptionally profitable in describing the features of the cosmological tradition of *waidan*, to which the largest part of Sivin’s essay is devoted. In my view, however, a true “technological” tendency becomes distinct in *waidan* only with Song and later sources, which describe metallurgical processes and in which neither cosmology nor ritual plays a significant role. By that time, *waidan* had lost much of its soteriological import, which had been taken over by *neidan*.

24. *Zhouyi cantong qi*, sec. 1 and 2 in Chen Zhixu’s recension, the *Zhouyi cantong qi fenzhang zhu* (Commentary to the *Zhouyi cantong qi*, with a Division into Sections).

25. See below, p. 220.

26. See below, p. 78.

27. On Ge Hong’s views about alchemy see below, Chapter 7. On the relationship between alchemy and meditation see Chapter 12.

28. *Baopu zi*, 4.84 (trans. Ware, 92–93).

29. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.1a and 14a.
30. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.7a and 12a.
31. *Langgan huadan shangjing* (= *Taiwei lingshu ziwen langgan huadan shenzhen shangjing*; CT 255), 3a (trans. Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 334).
32. On this passage see below, p. 191.
33. On this passage see below, p. 197.
34. *Baopu zi*, 4.77 (trans. Ware, 81). See also *Jiudan jingjue*, 6.3a, which quotes Ge Hong’s sentence.
35. For instance, two *waidan* wor“s related to the *Zhouyi cantong qi*, both of which are li“ely to date from the Tang period, state that “compounding the Great Elixir is not a matter of ingredients, but always of the Five Agents,” and even that “you do not use ingredients, you use the Five Agents.” See *Danlun jue zhixin jian* (Instructions on the Treatises on the Elixir, a Mirror Pointing to the Heart; CT 935), 3a; and *Huandan zhouhou jue* (Instructions on the Reverted Elixir to Keep at Hand; CT 915), 2.4b.
36. *Laozi zhongjing*, in *Yunji qiqian* (Seven Lots from the Boo“case of the Clouds; CT 1032; j. 18–19), sec. 1 and 11. The Great One is a major Daoist deity, representing in a divinized form the first stage of the generation of the cosmos by the Dao. The Central Yellow is, in the *Laozi zhongjing*, the father of the “infant” (*chizi*) that represents the inner self of the adept.
37. *Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 5; *Huangting neijing jing* (Scripture of the Inner Effulgences of the Yellow Court; in *Yunji qiqian*, j. 11–12.27b), sec. 29.
38. The phrases cited above are found in *Chuci*, 5.8b (*dushi*), 4.8a (*yu tiandi xiangbi*, *yu riyue tongguang*), 16.30b (*shengxu*), 16.27b (*chengyun*), 2.16b (*jialong*), and 17.2b (*baji*). On the relation of Shangqing Daoism to the traditions reflected in the *Chuci* and other early texts see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 147–59.
39. Radical rejection occurs only when the reverse process happens, i.e., when some authors disapprove of different traditions that borrow features of the alchemical doctrines—for instance, their original technical terminology—and apply them to domains that are deemed to be incompatible with alchemy. An example is the strong criticism addressed by some *neidan* authors towards the sexual practices.
40. For a recent analysis of transmission from “technicians” (specifically, diviners) to the scholarly milieu see Harper, “Physicians and Diviners,” which examines the traces of iatromancy (medical divination) in the *Huangdi neijing* (Inner Scripture of the Yellow Emperor). Harper also provides an extended survey of the esoteric arts before the Han period in his “Warring States Natural Philosophy and Occult Thought.” For the Han period see especially Ngo, *Divination, magie et politique*.
41. The notions shared by the Han literati, officials, and “masters of the methods” gave an essential contribution to the construction of the prevailing worldview of pre-modern China. There are different views, however, among

scholars on the respective roles that “philosophers” and “technicians” played in this regard during the Han period. For some of the main (and often contrasting) statements see Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 313–15 and passim; Sivin, “State, Cosmos, and Body in the Last Three Centuries B.C.”; and Kalinowskii, *Cosmologie et divination dans la Chine ancienne*, 47. The wide implications of correlative cosmology are emphasized by Kalinowskii, who remarks about the system of the Five Agents (through which he refers to the entire system of correlative cosmology): “Reducing it to a system of natural philosophy would not account for the extreme diversity of its components and its multiple applications in the domain of the investigation of things in general, but also in those of politics, religion, and the arts.”

42. See *Langgan huadan shangjing*, 3b and 4b (trans. Boenigk, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 334 and 335). The first of the two passages is quoted below, p. 96. Other Taiqing texts simply state that an alchemist should be helped by his companions” (*tongren*).

43. On the relationship between the *daoshi* and the *fangshi* see John Lagerwey, “L'écriture et le corps divin en Chine.” Lagerwey remarks, in particular: “le mode taoïste de production des symboles n'est pas le mode métaphysique des possédés, mais celui, scientifique, du devin” (p. 282).

44. Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 294.

45. On the Three Caverns see below, Chapter 2. On the antecedents of this system in Shangqing texts see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, I: 75–85. On Lingbao Daoism see Boenigk, “Sources of the Ling-pao Scriptures”; and Yamada Toshia, “The Lingbao School.” For references to studies on Shangqing see note 18 above.

46. On the Way of the Celestial Masters see Boenigk, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 29–148; and Nicolson, “The Southern Celestial Masters.”

## CHAPTER I

1. See Halleux, *Les textes alchimiques*, especially 47–49 and 59–72.

2. Halleux, 49 (“un ensemble de pratiques et de spéculations en rapport avec la transmutation des métaux”).

3. *Jindan dayao* (Great Essentials of the Golden Elixir; CT 1067), 3.4b.

4. The little we “now in this concern has been aptly summarized by Kim Daeyeol, “Le symbolisme de la force vitale en Chine ancienne” (chapter IV.3.1). See also Sivin, “Chinese Alchemy and the Manipulation of Time,” 113 and 117–18.

5. Zou Yan's biography is in the *Shiji* (Records of the Historian; ca. 90 BCE), 74.2344–46. Translations include Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, I: 159–61; and Sivin, “The Myth of the Naturalists,” 9–10. On Zou's alleged relation to alchemy see especially Dubs, “The Beginnings of Alchemy,” 77; and Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, 2: 240 and 5.III: 12. According to Needham (5.III: 14–16), the text “known as *Ji Ran zi* (Book of Master Ji Ran) or *Ji Ni zi* (Book of Master Ji Ni) contains evidence of connections between Zou

Yan and alchemy. Needham suggests that it belongs to a southern school of natural philosophy connected somehow to Tsou Yen [Zou Yan], and [is] therefore datable in the late fourth or early third century [BCE].” None of the extant fragments of this wor“, however, are concerned with the compounding of elixirs.

6. *Hanshu* (History of the Former Han Dynasty), 30.1733–35. On the extant fragments of Zou Yan’s wor“s see Sivin, “The Myth of the Naturalists,” 10–12. Some passages in the *Lüshi chunqiu* (Springs and Autumns of Sir Lü; ca. 240 BCE) believed to reflect Zou’s political theories are examined in Ngo, *Divination, magie et politique*, 15–16; and Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 329–30.

7. *Shiji*, 28.1369 note 10. On “release from the corpse” see Robinet, “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism”; and Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 52–60.

8. See Robinet, “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse,” 48–50 and 51–55. Some examples of these practices are mentioned below, p. 137. On the relation of “release from the corpse” to “release from the form” see my “The Notion of ‘Form’ and the Ways of Liberation in Daoism.”

9. Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 14 (transliteration and other conventions modified). On the *Hongbao yuanbi shu* see below in the present chapter. An anecdote on ma“ing gold according to a method found in a possibly related text, the *Zhenzhong hongbao* (Pillowboo“ of the Great Treasure), is quoted in *Baopu zi*, 16.285 (trans. Ware, 264–65).

10. Dubs, “The Beginnings of Alchemy,” 75.

11. Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 14 note a.

12. Dubs, “The Beginnings of Alchemy,” 67, 70, 78. See also Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 26–29.

13. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty by Pan Ku*, 1: 323; and his “The Beginnings of Alchemy,” 63.

14. *Hanshu*, 5.148 note 1. See also the remar“s in Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy: Preliminary Studies*, 22.

15. The most extensive survey of these sources, as far as their relation to alchemy is concerned, is found in Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 1–45; it shows that virtually all the available documents are hagiographic. Their cast includes, for instance, such well-known immortals and legendary figures as Mao Ying, Yin Changsheng, and Ma Mingsheng. All of them, as we shall see in the following chapters of this boo“, play an important role in hagiographic traditions related to Taiqing alchemy, but the stories that concern them have no historical import. Among the sources examined by Needham that are notably later than the events they claim to report are the sixth-century *Han Wudi neizhuan* (Inner Biography of Emperor Wu of the Han; CT 292) and the seventh- or eighth-century *Penglai shan xizao huandan ge* (Songs on the Reverted Elixirs of the Western Stove of Penglai; CT 916).

16. For studies on the *fangshi* see note 12 to the Introduction.

17. See Ngo, *Divination, magie et politique*, 160. DeWos“in, “A Source

Guide to the Lives and Techniques of Han and Six Dynasties *Fang-shih*,” does not record any reference to alchemy in approximately 250 biographies of *fang-shi* found in about two dozen sources.

18. *Baopu zi*, 4.79 (trans. Ware, 84).

19. *Zhen'gao* (Declarations of the Perfected; CT 1016), 14.16a–b, where Xianmen Gao appears as Yanmen zi (see Strickmann, “On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching,” 131).

20. In later times, Anqi sheng also was associated with the Taiqing tradition; see below, p. 145 and note 15 to Chapter 8.

21. See Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 25–26, whose translation I have quoted with minor changes; also Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 34–35. The meaning of the phrase “[had] drunk of pearl” is unclear, but “pearl” (*zhu*) appears in various terms used for refined mercury, e.g., *liuzhu*, or Liquid Pearl, and *xuanzhu*, or Mysterious Pearl.

22. *Hanshu*, 36.1928–29. See Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 13–14 and 35.

23. The *Shennong bencao jing* (Canonical Pharmacopoeia of Shennong), dating from the Han period, mentions the refining of mercury from cinnabar in its entry on cinnabar; see the quotation in the *Chongxiu Zhenghe jingshi zhenglei beiyong bencao* (The Newly Revised Practical Pharmacopoeia of the Zhenghe Period, with Examples and Classifications Based on the Classics and the Histories), 3.79.

24. See Le Blanc, *Huai-nan Tzu*, 43–45; and Roth, *The Textual History of the Huai-nan Tzu*, 23–25. Fragments of the *Hongbao yuanbi shu* are translated in Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 25–26. No explicit reference to alchemy appears in the *Huainan zi*. In particular, there is no definite indication that the well-known passage on the natural evolution of minerals found in this work (see Sivin, “The Theoretical Background of Elixir Alchemy,” 224–25; and Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought*, 212–16) is related to alchemy. While this passage bears some similarities to *waidan* notions developed in the Tang period, the assumptions on which it rests are different from those at the basis of alchemy, and no *waidan* text refers to it.

25. As suggested by Schafer, “The Stove God and the Alchemists,” 263–64. See also Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 29.

26. *Jiudan jingjue* (= *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue*; CT 885), 13.2a–b; see also 6.3b. “Elixir-Gold” (or “Cinnabar Gold”) is the name of an elixir obtained by the transmutation of the Golden Liquor, which is associated with the Great One (Taiyi). See the next passage quoted in this chapter, and also p. 117.

27. A corresponding passage found in *Baopu zi*, 4.83, is translated below, p. 117.

28. For more examples of the use of alchemical gold to cast vessels see Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 31 note a.

29. See below, pp. 129–30.



30. On the date of the received version of the *Sanshiliu shuifa* (CT 930), and on its quotations in the commentary to the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, see Appendix B.

## CHAPTER 2

1. See also trans. Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 356.
2. *Shu* primarily means “number” or “figure,” but the point of this question is whether the Dao has forms. Compare *Zhuangzi*, 43/17/23: “The Formless is what cannot be divided by measures.” The answer given by No-Limit testifies to the formlessness of the Dao; the one given by Non-Action refers to the Dao as something that can be apprehended as an object.
3. See also trans. Watson, *Chuang Tzu*, 243–44. The first part of this passage is also found in the *Huainan zi* (Boo“ of the Master of Huainan), 12.1A–B.
4. Compare *Zhuangzi*, 6/2/71–72 (trans. Watson, 46).
5. Mao Qiang and Xi Shi were ancient paragons of female beauty; see *Zhuangzi*, 6/2/69 (trans. Watson, 46).
6. See also trans. Larre, *Le Traité VII du Houai Nan Tseu: Les Esprits légers et subtils animateurs de l'Essence*, 63–65; and Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 42–43. The Great Clarity is mentioned again a few pages later in the same chapter (7.11b–12a); see Larre, Robinet, and Rochat de la Vallée, *Les grands traités du Huainan zi*, 93–94.
7. See also trans. Roth, *Original Tao: Inward Training (Nei-yeh) and the Foundations of Taoist Mysticism*, 76; and Ric“ett, *Guanzi: Political, Economic; and Philosophical Essays from Early China*, 2: 48–49. Corresponding passages are found in the “Xinshu xia” (Arts of the Heart, Part 2) chapter of the *Guanzi*, 13.223 (trans. Ric“ett, 2: 62); and in the *Huainan zi*, 2.5a–b.
8. Drifting Flow, Dawn Aurora, and Mysterious and Yellow are three of the Six Pneumas (*liuqi*). Compare the *Yuanyou* (Far-off Journey) poem of the *Chuci* (Elegies of Chu), 5.4a: “[I shall] sup on the Six Pneumas and quaff the Drifting Flow / Rinse my mouth with True Yang and imbibe the Dawn Aurora” (trans. Kroll, “On ‘Far Roaming,’” 661, slightly modified). On the Six Pneumas see Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 325–30; and Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts*, 307–9.
9. Mount Bantong is one of the peaks of Kunlun, the mountain at the center of the world. Compare the *Ai shiming* (Alas, My Lot Was Not Cast!) poem of the *Chuci*, 14.2a: “Brea“ing a jewelled spray off from that precious tree, I gazed on the mountains of Langfeng and Bantong” (trans. Haw“es, *The Songs of the South*, 263). Langfeng is another peak on the same mountain. See also Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought*, 152–54.
10. *Baopu zi*, 15.275: “Some visualize making a joint net (*jiaogang*) with five serpents, six dragons, and three oxen. They mount on it and rise upward for forty miles. That is called Great Clarity, and the pneuma (*qi*) in it is so strong than it can support people.”
11. *Taiqing jinye shendan jing* (CT 880), 1.14b–15a.

12. *Jiudan jingjue*, 2.1b.
13. *Baopu zi*, 4.76 and 4.83 (trans. Ware, 79 and 89, where the name Yuanjun is rendered as “Primal Lord”). The passage concerning the revelation of the *Golden Liquor* is quoted below, p. 114. On the Primordial Princess as the mother of Laozi see Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, 114–16. Her account in Du Guangting’s (850–933) *Yongcheng jixian lu* (Records of the Assembled Immortals of the Fortified Wall City; CT 783), 1.7b, mentions several secret names of elixirs similar to those found in the early *waidan* corpus; see Kohn, “The Mother of the Tao,” 99. On Laozi as a master and a disciple of the alchemical arts see Baldrian-Hussein, “Inner Alchemy: Notes on the Origin and Use of the Term *Neidan*,” 171–77.
14. See Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, 50–58.
15. See the account of the Mysterious Woman in *Yongcheng jixian lu*, 6.2a–4a (trans. Cahill, “Sublimation in Medieval China”). On the Mysterious Woman see also Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, 40–41; and van Gulik, “*Sexual Life in Ancient China*,” 73–76. Besides the one reported above, another tradition, recorded in the *Laojun kaitian jing* (Scripture of the Opening of Heaven by Lord Lao), states that Laozi wrote the *Taiqing jing* when he appeared to the mythical emperor Shun as Yinshou zi. See *Yunji qiqian* (Seven Lots from the Boo “case of the Clouds; CT 1032), 2.13b; trans. Schafer, “The Scripture of the Opening of Heaven by the Most High Lord Lao,” 17.
16. Goddesses and female immortals, for instance, play an analogous role in the revelations that originated Shangqing Daoism; see Despeux, *Immortelles de la Chine ancienne*, 51–67 passim. Similar examples are repeatedly observed throughout the history of Chinese religion, including modern and contemporary popular cults.
17. Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, 50–51 ( . . . l’Empereur Jaune n’est jamais un Maître; la sagesse qu’il détient est toujours restée en tant que disciple. Ses maîtres sont, d’une part ses ministres, d’autre part des sages taoïstes tel que Kouang Tch’eng tseu [Guangcheng zi], et aussi des divinités”). On the representation of the Yellow Emperor and other mythical sovereigns as receiving teachings from divine beings see also Harper, “The Sexual Arts of Ancient China,” 546–48. The Mysterious Woman and the Pure Woman, who are often associated with the sexual practices (*fangzhong shu*), are mentioned together in the passage quoted below in the present chapter from the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* (*Jiudan jingjue*, 5.2a), which states that the Yellow Emperor learned the practices of Nourishing Life (*yangsheng*) from them. Guangcheng zi is the Yellow Emperor’s instructor in chapter 11 of the *Zhuangzi*, and Qi Bo is the Celestial Master (Tianshi) who teaches the medical arts in the corpus of the *Huangdi neijing* (Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor).
18. *Guang Huangdi benxing ji* (Extended Records of the Deeds of the Yellow Emperor; CT 290), 3b. The “Instructions on the [Elixir in] Nine Cycles” may be related to the Elixir of Great Clarity, which is obtained through nine cyclical transmutations (see below, pp. 108–9).

19. Related passages are found in *Jiudan jingjue*, 3.1a, 3.3a, and 4.2a. See also *Shangdong xindan jingjue* (Instructions on the Scripture of the Heart Elixir of the Highest Cavern; CT 950), 3.1a–b (on this text see Appendix B), and *Baopu zi*, 18.323–24 (trans. Ware, 302–3). On the Baize, a mythical animal that gave the Yellow Emperor teachings about the shapes of harmful demons, see Kiang Chao-yuan, *Le voyage dans la Chine ancienne*, 71–80; Harper, “A Note on Nightmare Magic in Ancient and Medieval China”; and Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 321. La “e Dinghu is below Mount Jing, in a district still called Lingbao (Numinous Treasure).

20. For *wuhao* (bow of wailing) I follow the emendation suggested by Huang Hui in his critical notes to Wang Chong’s text. The story told in the *Lunheng* is one of the two main versions of the legend of Huangdi’s immortality. In the other version, Huangdi died and was buried. When his tomb was opened, people found in it only his sword and sandals: Huangdi had become an immortal through “release from the corpse” (*shijie*). On these and other variant accounts of Huangdi’s immortality see Kaltenmar, “*Le Lie-sien tchouan*, 50–53.

21. On the ritual function of the tripod in relation to political power see Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 296–302. On the date and the first recipient of the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* see below, pp. 61–62 and Appendix C.

22. On the nine tripods of Emperor Yu see Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, 269–70. It should be noted that, although the *Nine Elixirs* mentions the Nine Tripods in its title, the vessel used for the methods it describes is a normal earthenware crucible (*tufu*).

23. *Laozi zhongjing*, in *Yunji qiqian* (j. 18–19), sec. 3 on the Queen Mother and the King Father, and sec. 32 on the pneumas. On the *Laozi zhongjing* see Schipper, “The Inner World of the *Laozi zhongjing*”; and Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens.” Its descriptions of the main gods and some of its meditation practices are summarized in my “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy.”

24. On the Three Clarities and the main features of the related classificatory system see Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 190–94; and Ōfuchi Ninji, “The Formation of the Taoist Canon.” The brief outline given here and the data presented in Table 1 are based on the “Daojiao sandong zongyuan” (Lineal Origins of the Three Caverns of the Daoist Teaching), in *Yunji qiqian*, 3.4b–7a; and on the *Daojiao yishu* (Pivot of Meaning of the Daoist Teaching; CT 1129), 7.5b–6a.

25. On the *Sanhuang wen* see below, pp. 127–28. On the Three Caverns as the pneumas of the Three Sovereigns see *Wushang biyao* (Supreme Secret Essentials; CT 1138), 6.5b. The Three Caverns were at the basis of Lu Xiujing’s (406–77) classification of the Daoist scriptures of his time into three categories in his now-lost *Sandong jingshu mulu* (Catalogue of the Scriptures of the Three Caverns), dating from 471; see *Daojiao yishu*, 2.3b–4a. As remarked above, however, the earliest intimation of this system is found in Shangqing texts.

26. The *Zhenling weiye tu* was originally part of Tao Hongjing's *Dengzhen yinjue* (Concealed Instructions for the Ascent to Perfection). The received version of this work (CT 421) does not include it, but the text survives in a re-edition (CT 167) by Lüqiu Fangyuan (?–902). On the sevenfold system of Tao Hongjing see also Strickmann, "On the Alchemy of Tao Hung-ching," 179–80.

27. *Zhen'gao* (CT 1016), 16.10b.

28. *Zhen'gao*, 9.13a; *Dengzhen yinjue*, 2.21b and 3.27a.

29. *Zhenling weiye tu* (CT 167), 11b.

30. See Boenigk, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 281–83 and 295–97.

31. On the *Wushang biyao* (CT 1138) see Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao: Somme taoïste du VIe siècle*, which provides an introduction to the historical background of its compilation, an analysis of its composition, extended summaries of its extant chapters, and a study of its sources. Lagerwey (p. 268) gives the number of quoted works as approximately one hundred and twenty. Earlier studies had recorded a higher number, but many texts are quoted under different titles.

32. On the arrangement of the two main parts of the *Wushang biyao* see Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 34 and 44. The first part includes chapters 1 to 40, and the second, chapters 41 to 100. As Lagerwey remarks, the shift from the first to the second part is marked by several chapters (34 to 40) concerned with initiation and scriptural transmission.

33. See Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 34. The names of the states of transcendence are found in *j.* 88–100 (Lagerwey, 47–48 and 187–221). Two of the relevant chapters (*j.* 89 and 90) are lost, but the Dunhuang manuscript of the table of contents of the *Wushang biyao* (P. 2861; see Lagerwey, 69–70) supplies the titles of the missing sections.

34. *Wushang biyao*, *j.* 21 and 22 (Lagerwey, 42–43 and 98–102). In this account, the seven palaces in turn are situated below a series of four superior palaces that include those of the Great Canopy and the Jade Clarity. On the inclusion of the Jade Clarity heaven in the superior group, separated from the Highest Clarity and the Great Clarity, see Lagerwey, 100 note 1.

35. *Wushang biyao*, 22.21a–b. The source of this description in the *Wushang biyao* is an unidentified text, now lost, belonging to the Dongxuan (i.e., Lingbao) corpus.

36. *Wushang biyao*, 24.1a–b (Lagerwey, 104).

37. *Wushang biyao*, 32.1a (Lagerwey, 117). The three different designations for these textual bodies, namely, *wen* (scripts), *jing* (scriptures), and *shu* (writs), denote a progressive decrease in status. Note, again, that the heaven of Jade Clarity is associated with Shangqing, and the heaven of Highest Clarity with Lingbao.

38. *Wushang biyao*, 31.5b–6a (Lagerwey, 115). In this arrangement—which is based on an early Lingbao work, the *Duming miaojing* or *Wondrous Scripture on the Salvation of Life*—the writings associated with the Great Clarity include the *Taiping jing* (Scripture of Great Peace), another early text that initially was

ran “ed in the lowest niche of the classification scheme of the Three Caverns and later was assigned its own supplement” in the expanded Daoist Canon (see below, pp. 152–55). The present version of the *Duming miaojing* in the Daoist Canon is the *Taishang zhutian lingshu duming miaojing* (Wondrous Scripture on the Salvation of Life, Numinous Writ of All the Highest Heavens; CT 23), where the passage summarized above is found on pp. 14a–15a.

39. *Deye* also connotes virtuous “arma.” The two meanings are ultimately equivalent, as both refer to actions that result in the accomplishment of virtue.

40. *Wushang biyao*, 84.1a–6b (Lagerwey, 183). On the Eight Masters see above, p. 33. The *fangshi* include, for instance, Yanmen zi, Xu Fu, and Zhang Ju. Yanmen zi is also “nown as Xianmen Gao (see above, pp. 23 and 26). On Xu Fu and alchemy see Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 17–18. On Zhang Ju see Ngo, *Divination, magie et politique*, 111. The relation of Zhang Daoling to alchemy is discussed below in Chapter 8; it is significant, in view of what we shall say there, that the *Wushang biyao* places him in the lower heaven of Great Clarity.

41. The *Wushang biyao*, 83.14, associates Zuo Ci with the Elixir of the Nine Efflorescences (*jiuhua dan*), an alternative name of the Elixir of Great Clarity. He is said to have studied under Li Zhongfu and then to have moved to Mount Mao (Maoshan, Jiangsu), eventually to obtain an appointment in the heaven of the Great Ultimate. These hagiographic traits reflect his image in the Shangqing texts, on which see below, pp. 145–47.

42. On Juanzi and Su Lin see below, pp. 146–47.

43. *Wushang biyao*, 84.6b–11a.

44. *Wushang biyao*, j. 78 (Lagerwey, 47 and 180–81).

45. The descriptions of the five *zhi* (variously classified in the *Wushang biyao* among the drugs of the Great Ultimate, of Great Clarity, or of the Immortals of Heaven) correspond to those found in the *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue* (= *Taiji zhenren jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*; CT 889), 6b–8a. See below, Appendix B.

### CHAPTER 3

1. For “Taiqing” texts in Song bibliographic catalogues, see van der Loon, *Taoist Books in the Libraries of the Sung Period*, 91–92. On the Taiqing section of the Daoist Canon see below, Chapter 8.

2. *Baopu zi*, 4.76–77 (trans. Ware, 79–83). On these elixirs see below, pp. 108–10 and 132–33, respectively.

3. The “Preface” is found in the *Yunji qiqian* (CT 1032), 73.16a–17a.

4. *Jindan dayao* (Great Essentials of the Golden Elixir; CT 1067), 3.1a; the quoted passage is in *Yunji qiqian*, 73.16b–17a.

5. The two main parts of the *Taiqing jing tianshi koujue* (CT 883) are found in 1b–4b and 4b–15b, respectively (the title of the first part is not clearly distinguished from the text). The *Taiqing jing* is quoted in the first part as *benjing*, or “original scripture,” in 1b, 2b, 3a, 3b, and 4a. The methods in the second

part are said to have come from Hugang zi, who in turn had received them from Qianyuan zi. On Hugang zi see below, Appendix C.

6. *Jiudan jingjue*, 3.4a–b, 17.5a, and 5.9a–10a.

7. *Daojiao yishu*, 2.9a–b. On the relation between Zhang Daoling and alchemy see below, Chapter 8.

8. See below, Chapter 8.

9. See *Suishu* (History of the Sui Dynasty), 34.1049, and *Songshi* (History of the Song Dynasty), 51.5200, both listing a text in one scroll; *Nihonkoku genzaisho mokuroku* (Catalogue of [Chinese] Texts Existent in Japan; late tenth century), sec. 37 (p. 45), which mentions twelve scrolls; and *Daozang quejing mulu* (Catalogue of Missing Texts in the Daoist Canon; CT 1430), 2.1b, which indicates sixty-two scrolls.

10. Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 491–96.

11. Quotations from the *Daqing jing* are found in *j.* 2, 13, 19, 21, and 26–29 of the *Ishinpō* (Methods from the Heart of Medicine). On the passages quoted in *j.* 27 see Sa“ade Yoshinobu, “The Taoist Character of the ‘Chapter on Nourishing Life’ of the *Ishinpō*,” 791. The *Ishinpō* is almost contemporary with the *Nihonkoku genzaisho mokuroku*.

12. On the nineteen-chapter commentary see below in the present chapter; on its date and sources see Appendix C. The *Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing* (CT 952), which is attributed to a Perfected of Great Clarity (Taiqing zhenren), is quoted in the early seventh-century *Daodian lun* (Essays on Daoist Materials; CT 1130), 4.16a, with a title almost identical to the present one, i.e., *Liuzhu jiuzhuan shenxian jiudan jing*. I call the version of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* in the *Jiudan jingjue* “primary” mainly because of its format. This version forms a self-standing unit, whereas the version in the *Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing* is arranged as a commentary to verses on the Nine Elixirs, and is consequently fragmented among the corresponding lines of those verses. For more details on this text see Appendix B.

13. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.1a–3a, 3b–4a, and 4a–14b, respectively. On the two preliminary compounds and the methods of the Nine Elixirs see below, Chapter 6.

14. *Baopu zi*, 4.74–76 (trans. Ware, 75–78). The correspondence of Ge Hong’s account with the text in the *Jiudan jingjue* was first noted by Chen Guofu (*Daozang yuanliu kao*, 317).

15. Ge Hong’s summary of the *Nine Elixirs* is quoted in the *Shenxian jinzhuo jing*, 2.6a–7a and 3.1a–2b; the *Jiudan jingjue*, 2.1b–4a; the *Yunji qiqian*, 67.6a–8b; and the *Zhujia shenpin danfa* (Methods of the Divine Elixirs of Variou Masters; CT 918), 3.13a–14a.

16. For notes on these four texts see Appendix B.

17. *Baopu zi*, 4.82–83 (trans. Ware, 89–91).

18. On the Golden Liquor see below, Chapter 6. The *Shenxian jinzhuo jing* gives the method of the Golden Liquor in the first of its three chapters. The second and third chapters reproduce *Baopu zi* 4.70–74 and 4.74–87, respectively (including Ge Hong’s synopsis of the *Golden Liquor*, with the result that the

text contains its own summary). Among its main differences from the *Baopu zi* is a method attributed to an Elder Bai (Bai xiansheng, 3.7b) not found in the received version of Ge Hong's work. These materials were combined into a single text before the eleventh century, as shown by the citation of the *Shenxian jinzhuo jing* in the *Chongwen zongmu* (Complete List [of the Institute] for Venerating Texts; 1042), 9.21b (see van der Loon, *Taoist Books in the Libraries of the Sung Period*, 130). On the chemical features of the Golden Liquor as described by Ge Hong see Wang Kui's "e, Zhongguo liandan shu zhong de 'jinye' he huachi"; and Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 88 ff. Needless to say, no evidence supports the attribution of the commentary to Ge Hong.

19. *Shenxian jinzhuo jing*, 1.1b and 1.8a. The shift of weight system is also referred to by Ge Hong in a passage of the *Inner Chapters* where he says: "To compound [the Golden Liquor], take one pound of gold by the old scales." See below, p. 114.

20. *Xiaodao lun*, in *Guang hongming ji* (Expanded Collection Spreading the Light [of Buddhism]; T. 2103), 150c; trans. Kohn, *Laughing at the Tao*, 127–29. Both Chen Guofu (*Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 27) and Meng Naichang (*Daojiao yu Zhongguo liandan shu*, 67–69) have dated the commentary to the Six Dynasties based on the place names that it mentions. The *Xiaodao lun* passage rules out Wang Kui's suggestion (Zhongguo liandan shu zhong de 'jinye' he huachi," 59) that the text is a Tang forgery.

21. On some of these methods see Meng Naichang, *Daojiao yu Zhongguo liandan shu*, 156–65.

22. The portions in verses are found in *Taiqing jinye shendan jing* (CT 880), 1.13a10–14b9 and 2.1a3–6. The attribution of the preface to Zhang Daoling was already current by 500 CE, as shown by a quotation of Tao Hongjing's *Dengzhen yinjue* in the *Taiqing yulan* (Imperial Digest of the Taiping Xingguo Reign Period; 983), 671.4a–5b.

23. On the third chapter see Maspero, "Un texte taoïste sur l'Orient romain." Based on mentions of the name Fulin earlier than those known to Maspero, Rolf Stein (in notes appended to the Japanese translation of his *Remarques sur les mouvements du taoïsme politico-religieux au IIe siècle ap. J.-C.*, ii–iii) suggested that the third chapter dates from the middle or possibly the early sixth century.

24. The summary in the *Inner Chapters* is compared to the received *Golden Liquid of the Divine Immortals* below, pp. 114–18. For more details on the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* and the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing* see Appendix B.

25. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 1a–5b. On the method see below, Chapter 6. Part of this section is quoted as Method of the Nine Cycles (Jiuzhuan fa) in *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.1b (corresponding to *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 5a, on the purification of the ritual space; see below, p. 83) and 20.16b–17a (corresponding to *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 3b, on the transmutation of the elixir into gold and silver; see below, p. 108).

26. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 5b–6b. Both recipes are also found in *Yunji qiqian*, 77.10b–11b. According to a tradition recorded by Tao Hongjing in his *Zhenling weiye tu*, 9b, the Yellow Emperor received the Powder of the Four Fans from Fenghou, a deity who also assisted him in defeating the demon Chiyou.

27. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 6b–8a. For more details on this section see Appendix B.

28. A date earlier than the mid-seventh century is indicated by the bibliographic catalogue in the *Suishu*, 34.1049, which lists a *Taiji zhenren jiuzhuan huandan jing* as an independent text. The received version, however, must have been re-edited after the late seventh century, as shown by the mention of Jinzhou (2a), a prefecture established in 686 in present-day Hunan, as a source of cinnabar. On the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* see also Strickmann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 146–50; and on Mao Ying’s biography see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 2: 389–98.

29. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 1a and 5a.

30. On the *Lingshu ziwen* see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 2: 101–10. Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 275–372, translates the four parts of the text with an introduction to the work’s background and contents; for the *waidan* section see pp. 331–39. See also Schafer, “The Transcendent Vitamin: Efflorescence of Lang-kan,” 35–37; and Strickmann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 134–36. On the method see below, Chapter 6.

31. See Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 2: 106 and 110. These deities are mentioned in *Langgan huadan shangjing*, 2a–b and 7a; trans. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 333 and 339 (the first passage is quoted below, p. 83).

32. The relation of the Langgan method to the Taiqing tradition is also shown by a mention of the *Scripture of Great Clarity* in another portion of the *Lingshu ziwen*; see *Shangqing housheng Daojun lieji* (Annals of the Lord of the Dao, Saint of the Latter Age of Highest Clarity; CT 442), 8b (trans. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 354), where the context seems to suggest that *Taiqing jing* refers to the *Scripture of Great Clarity* rather than the entire Taiqing corpus of texts. Vice versa, the term *langgan* is mentioned in the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*; see *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.4b.

33. The *Taiqing danjing yaojue* is contained in *j. 71* of the *Yunji qiqian*. In addition to the masterly study and translation by Nathan Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy: Preliminary Studies*, see also Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 132–38; and Meng Naichang, *Daojiao yu Zhongguo liandan shu*, 48–49. Sun’s preface (1a–2a) twice uses the word *zhuan*, normally meaning “to select” or “to edit” from a larger compilation.

34. *Taiqing danjing yaojue*, in *Yunji qiqian*, 71.3b–9a; trans. Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 160–68.

35. *Taiqing danjing yaojue*, in *Yunji qiqian*, 71.27a; trans. Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 208–9. On the pellet and the talisman associated with it see below, pp. 87–88.



36. See Meng Naichang, *Daojiao yu Zhongguo liandan shu*, 46–48; and (especially on the third chapter) Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 282–94 passim.

37. *Xin Tangshu* (New History of the Tang Dynasty), 59.1521.

38. See Baldrian-Hussein, “Inner Alchemy,” 165–67; Soymié, “Le Lo-feou chan: Étude de géographie religieuse,” 120 and 122; and Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 314–18.

39. *Taiqing shibi ji* (Records from the Stone Wall of Great Clarity; CT 881), 2.4b. One might only speculate on whether the name of this elixir provided inspiration for the legends about Su Yuanming as one of the earliest *neidan* masters (or, perhaps more likely, vice versa).

40. *Taiqing shibi ji*, 1.4a and 3.1a; *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.2a–b and 18.2b (the last method). The Elixir of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi jiuding dan*) and the Great Reverted Elixir of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi jiuding da huandan*), whose methods are found in *Shibi ji*, 1.2a (trans. Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 131) and 1.2b, instead, have nothing in common, except for their names, with the Nine Elixirs.

41. See Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 257–61. While the alternative names are listed under the relevant recipes in the *Taiqing shibi ji*, Sun Simiao places them in a separate section of his *Danjing yaojue*, 2a–3b (trans. Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 151–60). Several synonyms in both texts correspond to those found in the *Shiyao erya* (Synonymic Dictionary of the Materia Medica; CT 901), which cites both a *Shibi ji* and a *Chuze jing* (Scripture of the Moorlands of Chu; compare the name of the editor of the present *Shibi ji*, the Elder of the Moorlands of Chu) in its bibliography, 2.3b and 2.7a.

42. See Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 151–55. The elixirs marked as B1, C1, E1, and G1 in Sivin’s list correspond to those whose methods are found in *Taiqing shibi ji*, 1.4b, 2.10b–11a, 1.12a–b, and 1.10a–b, respectively.

43. *Taiqing shibi ji*, 3.12b–14a; *Taiqing danjing yaojue*, in *Yunji qiqian*, 71.4b, 14b, 7a. Some of the shared passages are translated below in Appendix B. On the relation between the *Taiqing shibi ji* and the *Danjing yaojue* see also Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 76–79 and 258–59.

44. *Jiudan jingjue*, 2.6b, 8.4b–5a, 14.2a–b, and 15.5b. See also below, Appendix C.

45. *Jiudan jingjue*, 11.4b.

46. The original passage is found in *Baopu zi*, 14.259 (trans. Ware, 240).

47. For details on the date of the *Jiudan jingjue* see Appendix C, where I discuss the possibility that the compilation of the commentary took place in close association with that of the *Xinxiu bencao* (Newly Revised Pharmacopoeia; 659).

48. *Jiudan jingjue*, 7.11a, 8.4b–5a, and 8.3a, respectively.

49. An outline of the single chapters, notes on the main sources, and a discussion of the evidence for dating the commentary are found below in Appendix C.

## CHAPTER 4

1. *Shuowen jiezi zhu* (Commentary to the *Elucidations of the Signs and Explications of the Graphs*), 5B.1a. On the meanings of the word *dan* see also Sanaka Sō, “Tan no jigi to jittai no henshen,” 264–67; and Shirakawa Shizuka, *Kanji no sekai*, 2: 186.
2. See especially Morohashi Tetsuji, *Dai kanwa jiten*, entry no. 99; and Zhang Qiyun, *Zhongwen dacidian*, entry no. 101.
3. Morohashi, *Dai kanwa jiten*, entry no. 99; Shinmura Izuru, *Kōjien*, 1941 (s.v. *ni*), has “red-colored earth” (*aka iro no tsuchi*).
4. Morohashi, *Dai kanwa jiten*, entry no. 99; Zhang Qiyun, *Zhongwen dacidian*, entry no. 101.
5. For these and other synonyms of cinnabar see *Shiyao erya*, 1.1b; *Bencao gangmu*, 9.517–19; and Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 391–92.
6. Ruan Ji (210–63), “Yonghuai shi” (Poems on Singing of Thoughts), no. 31, in *Ruan Ji ji* (Collected Works of Ruan Ji), 101; *Xunzi* (300/250 BCE), 5.109.
7. The compound *danxin* (cinnabar heart) occurs with the same meaning in both modern Chinese and Japanese (pron. *tanshin*), whereas modern Japanese preserves the expression *tansei*, meaning “sincerity,” as well as *tannen*, meaning “attention, concentration.” See Shinmura, *Kōjien*, 1623.
8. *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng* (Meanings and Pronunciations in the *Elucidations of the Signs and Explications of the Graphs*), quoted in *Shuowen jiezi gulin* (Collected Glosses to the *Elucidations of the Signs and Explications of the Graphs*), 5B.322a.
9. *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, 5B.1a.
10. Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recensa*, nos. 147 to 149. The first word mentioned below also occurs in the compound *danxin* “simple, sincere” (compare the homophone *danxin* meaning “cinnabar heart”). For the Chinese characters used in these homophones see the Glossary.
11. *Laozi zhongjing*, in *Yunji qiqian* (j. 18–19), sec. 17 and 35.
12. Kaltenmark, *Le Lie-sien tchouan*, 10 ff. See also the extended iconographic documentation collected in Sofukawa Hiroshi, “Kandai gazō-seki ni okeru shōsen-zu no keifu.”
13. Kaltenmark, *Le Lie-sien tchouan*, 18. On becoming as radiant as the sun after ingesting an elixir see, for instance, the passages quoted above, pp. 13 and 15, from the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* and the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*.
14. Kaltenmark, *Le Lie-sien tchouan*, 20. See also Kroll, “On ‘Far Roaming,’” 661.
15. *Chuci*, 5.5a.
16. On the same theme in a different tradition see Corbin, *L’homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien*, especially 149–54.
17. Kaltenmark, *Le Lie-sien tchouan*, 20–21.
18. See Granet, *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne*, 2: 495–96.

19. *Zhen'gao*, 11.6. See Soymié, “Le Lo-feou chan,” 97–103.
20. *Baopu zi*, 11.197, 198.
21. On this elixir see below, pp. 132–33.
22. See Lao Gan, “Zhongguo dansha zhi yingyong ji qi tuiyan,” 519–21; and Kumagai Osamu, “Kodai Chūgo ‘u no shu ni tsuite,’” 17–23. Both authors provide a large number of references to sources on these and other uses of the color red, only occasionally duplicated.
23. Lao Gan, “Zhongguo dansha zhi yingyong ji qi tuiyan,” 522; David Keightley, *Sources of Shang History: The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China*, 55. On the uses of cinnabar in “see the remarks by Tsien Tsuen-Hsuein in Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.I: 109.
24. Lao Gan, “Zhongguo dansha zhi yingyong ji qi tuiyan,” 523–26; Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 297–302.
25. See Kaltenmarck, “*Ling-pao*: Note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux,” especially 561–63; and Bo “en ‘amp, ‘The Peach Flower Font and the Grotto Passage.’”
26. *Hanshu*, 99A.4079 and 4091; Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 298–99.
27. Kumagai Osamu, “Kodai Chūgo ‘u no shu ni tsuite,’” 19; *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.13b. Even nowadays, protective red badges are posted on house doors in some parts of China.
28. Besides Lao Gan (“Zhongguo dansha zhi yingyong ji qi tuiyan,” 522) and Kumagai Osamu (“Kodai Chūgo ‘u no shu ni tsuite,’” 20), several other scholars have referred to this custom, including Arthur Waley (“Notes on Chinese Alchemy,” 18–19) and Joseph Needham (*Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 2–3). The most thorough study, which examines about twenty relevant sites, is Tagawa Yoshia“i, “Chūgo ‘u shin-se ‘‘i jidai no bosō ni o ‘eru tosho jin ‘otsu ni tsuite.’” I am aware of an analogous case in Japan that occurred only a few decades ago.
29. Zhuo Zhenxi, “Shaanxi Huxian de liang zuo Hanmu,” 47; Seidel, “Traces of Han Religion in Funeral Texts Found in Tombs,” 25. On the sentence “According to the statutes and the ordinances!” (*ru liling*), which often appears at the end of Han official and later religious documents, see Seidel, 39–42.
30. See above, Chapter 4.
31. See Esposito, “Sun-Worship in China: The Roots of Shangqing Taoist Practices of Light”; and Diény, “Pour un lexique de l’imagination littéraire en Chine: Le symbolisme du soleil,” especially 140–41 and 149.
32. Zhang Qiyun, *Zhongwen dacidian*, entry no. 101.93.
33. See, for instance, *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.5a, 7a, 8a, 13b, and 14a.
34. *Huainan zi*, 3.1b; *Lunheng*, 11.508. For similar statements in other sources see Diény, “Pour un lexique de l’imagination littéraire en Chine,” 145.
35. *Dadong lian zhenbao jing xiufu lingsha miaojue* (Wondrous Instructions on Fixing Cinnabar, Supplementary to the Scripture of the Great Cavern on

Refining the Real Treasure; CT 890), preface, 1b, and main text, 1a. *Shenming* also denotes divine beings.

36. *Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing* (Scripture of the Liquid Pearl in Nine Cycles and of the Nine Elixirs of the Divine Immortals; CT 952), 1.7a and 7b.

37. *Zhang zhenren jinsbi lingsha lun* (Treatise of the Perfected Zhang on Metals, Stones, and Cinnabar; CT 887), 1a.

38. *Wenyan* (Explanation of the Sentences) appendix to the *Yijing* (Boo“ of Changes), sec. 4, on the hexagram *kun*. On the Mysterious and Yellow see also Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 218–20.

39. On the method for ma“ing the Mysterious and Yellow see below, pp. 102–3. It is noteworthy that, in the Taiqing tradition, the lead-mercury compound is not an elixir and is used only for the purposes mentioned above. Instead, in a large part of the later *waidan* tradition, lead and mercury become the two main ingredients of the elixir, and in *neidan* their symbolic role as emblems of Yin and Yang becomes even more important. Curiously, the history of these two emblematic metals in Chinese alchemy begins with their function as ingredients of a luting compound.

40. *Jiudan jingjue*, 7.5a–b.

41. *Langgan huadan shangjing*, 1a (trans. Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 332). On the methods for ma“ing the Mud of the Six-and-One see below, pp. 103–4.

42. *Huainan zi*, 2.1a–2a. On this passage see Norman Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism: The Theme of Chaos (hun-tun)*, 150–52. Some scholars have suggested that, although each stage of the *Huainan zi* is related to one proposition of the *Zhuangzi*, the two series do not entirely match each other. Charles Le Blanc ( From Ontology to Cosmogony: Notes on *Chuang Tzu* and *Huai-nan Tzu*,” 201–6), in particular, proposes that the two series would correspond if the propositions of the *Zhuangzi* are rearranged by placing the fourth one ( being”) before all the others, i.e., as the most recent stage. In the passage referred to above, however, being” (*you*) does not denote the present state of manifestation but its underlying principle. The *Zhuangzi* postulates the occurrence of other stages between the principle of Being (which is unmanifested) and actual existence, or multiplicity (the ten thousand things,” *wanwu*).

43. Trans. Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism*, 81. See his comments on pp. 81–98.

44. On this theme see Rolf Stein, *Le monde en petit: Jardins en miniature et habitations dans la pensée religieuse d’Extrême-Orient*, 61–82 and passim; Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism*, passim; and Kominami Ichiro, Tsubogata no uchū.” On the related theme of the crucible as cosmic egg” in later Chinese alchemy see Sivin, The Theoretical Bac“ground of Elixir Alchemy,” 292–97.

45. *Jiudan jingjue*, 10.1b; *Laozi*, 21.

## CHAPTER 5

1. *Jiudan jingjue*, 3.4a–8a and 6.1a–2a. On Liu Xiang’s and Tao Hongjing’s unsuccessful experiments with *waidan* see above, p. 31, and below, p. 145, respectively.

2. On Daoist rites of transmission, and their analogies with ceremonies of political allegiance, see Rolf Stein, “Aspects de la foi jurée en Chine”; Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 327–35 and *passim*; Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 120–21; and Christine Mollier, *Une apocalypse taoïste du Ve siècle: Le Livre des Incantations Divines des Grottes Abyssales*, 117–18.

3. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.1b. On the offering of golden figurines in Daoist transmission rituals, and on throwing talismans into east-flowing streams, see *Wushang biyao* (The Supreme Secret Essentials; CT 1138), 27.7b and 34.12a–16a (Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 109 and 124), respectively. See also Chen Guofu, *Dao-zang yuanliu kao*, 283–84. Kim Daeyeol, “Le symbolisme de la force vitale en Chine ancienne” (chap. III.2), shows that the fish often appears in early Chinese literature and iconography as an image of communicating with divine beings, and suggests that the golden figurines of the man and the fish offered in the rite of transmission represent the adept’s wish to enter the realm of the immortals.

4. The *Wushang biyao*, 34.12b (Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 124), mentions the replacement of blood and the haircut with golden rings and green sil’.

5. The offerings mentioned have the same colors as gold and silver, a relevant detail since alchemy is often called the Art of the Yellow and White (*huangbai shu*), with reference to those two metals. The passage on the transmission of the *Scripture of Great Clarity* is quoted in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*, which replaces blood with cinnabar; see *Jiudan jingjue*, 3.4a–b. The commentary, 3.4b–8a, also quotes passages on the rite of transmission from three lost wor’ attributed to Hugang zi (on whom see Appendix C) and from a fourth anonymous source.

6. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue* (= *Taiji zhenren jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*; CT 889), 5a–b.

7. The Nine Old Lords of the Immortals are deities of the heaven of Great Clarity; see *Zhenling weiye tu*, 12a. A talisman of the Nine Old Lords is reproduced in Fig. 7 in the present chapter. On the unauthorized transmission and appropriation of Daoist scriptures see Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 333–35. Two fragments from the *Taiqing zhongjing* (Central Scripture of Great Clarity) on the rules of transmission are quoted in *Taiping yulan* (Imperial Digest of the Taiping Xingguo Reign Period), 679.2a.

8. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.3a.

9. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.1b. A slightly different version of the transmission rite of the *Nine Elixirs* is found in the *Shangdong xindan jingjue*, 1.3b–4a.

10. Similar passages are found in the *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.2a, and the *Langgan huadan shangjing*, 3a and 4a (trans. Bo’ en’ amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 334

and 335). On ma“ing ablutions before a *zhai* see *Wushang biyao*, 66.1a–4b (Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 174–75).

11. *Taiqing shibi ji*, 1.4a–b.

12. *Baopu zi*, 4.83, summarizing the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor* (translated below, p. 114). On the “pure chamber” in early Daoism see Stein, “Remarques sur les mouvements du taoïsme politico-religieux au IIe siècle ap. J.-C.,” 70–72; Strickmann, *Le Taoïsme du Mao Chan*, 149–52; and Yoshiwara Tadao, *Seishitsu* “ō.”

13. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.1b and 1.2a; see also the commentary, 7.2b.

14. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 4b; *Langgan huandan shangjing*, 1a and 2a (trans. Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 331 and 333).

15. Trans. Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 333, quoted with minor changes.

16. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.2a. On the five fragrances see below in the present chapter, and Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 358.

17. *Jiudan jingjue*, 4.3b–4a. The only combinations that actually occur among these four mar“ers are *jiawu* and *yisi*.

18. *Jiudan jingjue*, 4.4b–5a; quoted from *Baopu zi*, 17.303 (trans. Ware, 286–87). The relevant passage, which Ge Hong indicates as coming from the *Lingbao jing* (*Scripture of the Numinous Treasure*), is now found in the *Tai-shang lingbao wufu xu* (*Prolegomena to the Five Talismans of the Most High Numinous Treasure*; CT 388), 3.8b–9a. The *Jiudan jingjue*, the *Wufu xu*, and the *Baopu zi* all lac“ details on the “responsible” days. In the *Huainan zi*, 3.28b, these are said to be the days whose cyclical characters correspond to two Agents that generate each other; see Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought*, 131. There are actually no Agents that give birth to each other in the “generative” (*xiangsheng*) cycle of the Five Agents. As Major notes on p. 132, the import of the *Huainan zi* passage is rhetorical rather than cosmological. This might be the reason why the “responsible” days are not mentioned in the three texts mentioned above, which are concerned with rules for actual practices.

19. *Jiudan jingjue*, 4.5a; quoted from *Baopu zi*, 17.301 (trans. Ware, 283), with variants.

20. *Jiudan jingjue*, 4.4a–b; quoted from *Baopu zi*, 17.299–300 (trans. Ware, 280–81).

21. *Jiudan jingjue*, 4.5a–b; quoted from *Baopu zi*, 17.301 (trans. Ware, 283).

22. *Jiudan jingjue*, 4.5b; quoted from *Baopu zi*, 17.301 (trans. Ware, 283), with variants.

23. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.2a and 1.2b.

24. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.1b and 5a–6a. Owing to a copying error in the *Jiudan jingjue*, a lengthy passage concerned with other ritual rules interrupts on p. 1b, col. 5, the list of tabooed days in item 2 above; the text resumes from p. 5a, col. 10, where it had left off (on the character *chun*, “spring”). The *Shangdong*

*xindan jingjue*, 3.16b–17a, gives the same list of days without the error of the *Jiudan jingjue*.

25. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.6a–b. Uttering the name of a spirit or a demon is done in order to obtain control over it and subdue it. The corresponding passage in the *Shangdong xindan jingjue*, 3.17a–b, has “Bucong zi” for “Shicong zi.”

26. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.6b. The Four Calamities are also listed in the *Shangdong xindan jingjue*, 3.17b–18a, which gives a different version of the first one: the soil is devoid of “elixir’s pneuma” (*danqi*) and is not a “divine soil” (*shentu*).

27. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.7a; also in *Shangdong xindan jingjue*, 3.18a. A note in both texts states that the third and fourth items are missing in the “original version” (*yuanben*).

28. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.2a.

29. *Jiudan jingjue*, 10.6b–7a. On a similar system of computation see Kalinows“i, *Cosmologie et divination dans la Chine ancienne*, 233–34.

30. *Jiudan jingjue*, 5.2b–3b, quoting from *Baopu zi*, 17.300, 19.336–37, and 18.323 (trans. Ware, 282, 314–16, and 302; the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* is not mentioned in the *Baopu zi*). The initial and final portions of this passage are also found in the *Shangdong xindan jingjue*, 3.6a.

31. *Jiudan jingjue*, 4.5b–7a, quoting from *Baopu zi*, 17.304 (trans. Ware, 287–89).

32. *Wushang biyao*, 57.1b–2a (Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 169), quoting from the *Taizhen ke* (Codes of Great Perfection). On the Nocturnal Invocation see Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, 90–105. The *Taizhen ke* is lost except for quotations in the *Wushang biyao*.

33. *Jiudan jingjue*, 5.3b–4a.

34. *Taiqing danjing yaojue*, in *Yunji qiqian*, 71.27a (trans. Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 208–9); and *Jiudan jingjue*, 5.9a–10a, where two versions of the talisman are given, the second one being a variant of its inner section. The method in Sun Simiao’s wor“ is called Method for Compounding the Pellets for Killing the Demons While Refining the Elixirs (Liandan he shagui wan fa”).

35. *Jiudan jingjue*, 5.10b–14b. On the Pace of Yu see Poul Andersen, “The Practice of *Bugang*”; on “guarding the One” see below, pp. 136–38.

36. *Jiudan jingjue*, 5.4a–7a.

37. The text appended to this talisman is also found in *Baopu zi*, 17.308 (trans. Ware, 295), where Ge Hong describes the Secret Talisman of the Forty-nine Perfected of the Central Womb of the Yellow Court of Laozi (*Laozi huangting zhongtai sishijiu zhen bifu*), but does not provide its illustration. The commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* in turn contains a Secret Talisman of the Thirty-nine Perfected of the Yellow Court of Lord Lao (see below), but the appended text is different.

38. The text appended to this talisman, but not the talisman itself, is similar to the one found in *Baopu zi*, 17.310 (trans. Ware, 296).

39. See note 37 above.

40. The text appended to this talisman corresponds to the one found in *Baopu zi*, 17.309 (trans. Ware, 296), which describes the five Talismans of Laozi for Entering a Mountain (*Laozi rushan fu*), and probably derives from the original *Lingbao jing* (Bo“en“amp, “Sources of the Ling-pao Scriptures,” 450). None of the five talismans, however, is similar to the one reproduced in the *Jiudan jingjue*.

41. *Jiudan jingjue*, 5.8b–10a. All talismans in this set are reproduced, with the appended texts, in *Shangdong xindan jingjue*, 3.9a–11a.

42. This talisman is associated with the Pellet for Expelling the Demons, mentioned above in this chapter.

43. The text appended to this talisman partly corresponds to the one found in *Baopu zi*, 17.310 (trans. Ware, 296), where Ge Hong mentions an identically named talisman but does not reproduce it, saying that it should be “ept secret.” The variants in the *Jiudan jingjue* allow for a better understanding of Ge Hong’s statement.

44. *Jiudan jingjue*, 19.4a–8b. All talismans in this set, together with the appended texts and the introductory passage, are also found in *Shangdong xindan jingjue*, 3.12a–16a.

45. Another Eight-Inch Sil“ Talisman is reproduced in *Ji. 20* of the *Jiudan jingjue* (see below, Precious Talisman for Warding Off Evil, no. 5), but the illustration and the appended text are different.

46. The illustration of this talisman is followed by an invocation quoted from the *Precious Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing shendan baojing*, possibly a variant title of the *Taiqing jing*) in six verses of four characters, and by a note stating that this talisman should be placed in an envelope of green sil“ and worn on one’s head. This ensures that the essences of the elixir are not lost.

47. The text appended to the illustrations of these five talismans includes an invocation to be uttered before one ingests the elixir. The *Shangdong xindan jingjue*, 3.16a, gives a different version of the last passage. A set of Divine Talismans of the Five Emperors (*wudi shenfu*), to be affixed above the furnace, is mentioned in the *Taiqing shibi ji*, 1.13b–14a; each is related to an ingredient of the Elixir of the Five Minerals (*wushi dan*).

48. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.3b–4b. The second illustration is a variant of the first one. On the Nine Old Lords see above, note 7.

49. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.5a.

50. An Eight-Inch Sil“ Talisman different from the present one is illustrated in *Jiudan jingjue*, 19.4b; see above, note 45.

51. Only the first three characters of this invocation are found in the *Jiudan jingjue*, which then continues with the list of the Five Interdictions; see above, note 24.

52. Trans. Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 335, quoted with minor changes. According to a quotation of this passage in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* (see next note), the plaster for the furnace is made with white clay,



mud from Putai, vinegar, and water from an east-flowing stream. The district of Putai (in present-day Shandong) was first established during the Sui period and is not mentioned in the *Flower of Langgan*. This and other variants suggest that the passage quoted from the *Flower of Langgan* in the *Jiudan jingjue* does not come from the same version of the text that is included in the Daoist Canon (CT 255).

53. *Jiudan jingjue*, 7.2a–b and 7.3b–4a.

54. *Jiudan jingjue*, 7.3b. On the Three Terraces and the Five Peaks as alchemical terms see Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 35–36.

55. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 4b.

56. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.2a–b; *Sanshiliu shuifa*, 1.2a–b; *Taiqing shibi ji*, 1.4a–b; *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.7a.

57. In the *jianchu* (Establishment and Removal) hemerological system, the day of Establishment is marked by the same Earthly Branch as the current month, and the day of Receiving is the tenth in the twelve-day cycle that begins on a day of Establishment. See Michael Loewe, “The Almanacs (*jih-shu*) from Shui-huti,” 9–15; Kalinowskii, “Les traités de Shuihudi,” 198–99; and Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought*, 118–20. The Killer of the Month is a calendrical demon active on different days of different months. In the eleventh month (*zi*) he is on the Branch *wei*, in the twelfth month (*chou*) he is on *chen*, in the first month (*yin*) he is on *chou*, and so forth. This demon is first mentioned in a calendar dating from 108 BCE; see Liu Lexian, “Yinwan Hanmu chutu lipu ji qi xiangguan wenti,” 256. I am grateful to Marc Kalinowskii for this reference.

58. The *Taiqing shibi ji*, 1.4a, and the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.7a, add the seventh of the seventh month. These three days are the so-called Three Yang Times (*san yangshi*), also deemed to be suitable for fixing mercury and lead; see *Jiudan jingjue*, 11.5a–b.

59. The days of Opening and Removal are the second and the eleventh, respectively, in the twelve-day cycle that begins on a day of Establishment.

60. *Jiudan jingjue*, 7.3a.

61. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.3a; also in *Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing*, 1.5b–6a, and in *Shangdong xindan jingjue*, 1.8b–9a. On the three gods to whom the invocation is addressed see above, p. 15.

62. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.3a–b.

63. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.3b.

64. *Jiudan jingjue*, 7.3b, quoting as its source “Hugang zi’s Interdictions for Compounding the Alchemical Medicines” (Hugang zi zao danyao jinshen). The *Taiqing jing tianshi koujue* (Oral Instructions of the Celestial Master on the Scripture of Great Clarity; CT 883), 10a, recommends that one ingest the elixir on a *wangxiang* day (ruler and assistant”; see above, p. 84).

65. *Langgan huadan shangjing*, 4b–5a (trans. Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 336). An extended collection of rules and interdictions for ingesting the elixirs is found in j. 3 of the *Taiqing shibi ji*; on some of them see Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 282–94 passim.

## CHAPTER 6

1. *Taiqing jing tianshi koujue*, 3a–b; quoted in *Jiudan jingjue*, 7.6a–b, as Method for Ma“ing the Red Earthenware Crucible” (*zuo chitu fu fa*).
2. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 1a. Brief instructions on the crucible are also found in the commentary to the *Shenxian jinzhuo jing*, 1.3a–b. A different type of vessel, whose lower and upper halves are made of iron and clay, respectively, is described in both *Taiqing* anthologies of the Tang period. See *Taiqing danjing yaojue*, in *Yunji qiqian*, 71.3b–9a (trans. Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 166–68); and *Taiqing shibi ji*, 1.5b–7a and 2.4a–b (trans. Ho Peng Yo“e, *Li, Qi and Shu*, 206).
3. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.3b.
4. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.8a. The same wor“ (8.4a–b) quotes the methods for the solutions of realgar and cinnabar from the *Sanshiliu shuifa* (Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions; CT 930), 1b–2a and 2b (trans. Ts’ao, Ho, and Needham, “An Early Mediaeval Chinese Alchemical Text on Aqueous Solutions,” 125–26; for the solution of cinnabar see above, pp. 33–34). These two methods are part of a section entitled “Methods of the Three Essences and Six Liquors” ( “Sanjing liuye fa,” 8.3b–4b), a title that refers to the three solutions of white alum, realgar, and cinnabar, for which this section describes altogether six methods (one for white alum, two for realgar, and three for cinnabar). The Three Essences and Six Liquors are also mentioned in the *Shiyao erya*, 2.4b.
5. See below in the present chapter the summaries of the methods of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles and the Elixir Flower of Langgan.
6. *Jiudan jingjue*, 17.3a.
7. The two methods are in *Jiudan jingjue*, 17.3a–b. See also 20.15a, where the compound is called White of Lead (*qianbai*). On the method of the Flowery Pond found in the original *Scripture of Great Clarity* see below in the present chapter.
8. *Taiqing jing tianshi koujue*, 3a.
9. *Jiudan jingjue*, 12.1a–b.
10. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.8a–9a.
11. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.3b–4a (also quoted in the commentary, 7.5a–b). For a similar method see *Taiqing danjing yaojue*, in *Yunji qiqian*, 71.3b–9a (trans. Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 160–68), which appends notes on the single ingredients. Besides the one referred to above, the *Nine Elixirs* also gives directions for a second method, which simply consists in luting the crucible and leaving it to dry inside a jar; see *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.4a.
12. *Shenxian jinzhuo jing*, 1.3b–4a.
13. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 1a–b and 2a–b.
14. *Langgan huandan shangjing*, 1a–2a (trans. Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 332–33). On the Yellow Elixir see below in the present chapter. By early Tang times, Chinese alchemists had an even wider variety of methods to choose from when they prepared the mud, a selection of which is given in *j.* 7 of the *Jiudan jingjue*.

15. *Jiudan jingjue*, 17.6a–b. In this method, vinegar is called *shui*, which stands for *shenshui* or Divine Water, one of its most common synonyms.

16. *Taiqing jing tianshi koujue*, 1b.

17. The same method of the Flowery Pond for the Elixir of Great Clarity is given twice in the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs*, 17.4b–5a, which indicates as its source the “Method for making the Flowery Pond from the first part of the *Central Scripture of Great Clarity*,” i.e., the *Scripture of Great Clarity* itself, in one instance, and the “Oral Instructions of the Celestial Master on the Flowery Pond of Great Clarity,” i.e., the present *Oral Instructions*, in the other. This shows that the method now found in the *Oral Instructions* is the original procedure of the *Scripture of Great Clarity*. The reference to the “first part (*shang-pian*) of the *Central Scripture of Great Clarity*” also suggests that the *Taiqing jing* existed in the seventh century in a form similar to the one “known to Ge Hong three hundred years earlier, i.e., divided into three sections.

18. On the “fire times” in *waidan* see Sivin, “The Theoretical Background of Elixir Alchemy,” 266–79; for the doctrinal foundations of this system see Pregadio, “The Representation of Time in the *Zhouyi cantong qi*.”

19. See Kim Daeyeol, “Le symbolisme de la force vitale en Chine ancienne,” chapter VII.3.

20. On the sentence added in brackets see below, p. 168.

21. *Langgan huadan shangjing*, 4a–b (trans. Boenamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 335). Based on comparison with the three main early *Taiqing* sources, there is no indication that the heating method described in this text and in the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* was typical of the Shangqing *waidan* texts. For a different view see Sivin, “Theoretical Background,” 269.

22. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.16a–b.

23. *Dian* is the same term mentioned above in relation to the “fire times.” In the Tang *waidan* texts, the implication is that the “particle” of Original Pneuma, represented by elixir, confers its properties to the entire cosmos. Despite the difference in formulation, the same notion underlies the *Taiqing* texts.

24. On making vessels of alchemical gold see also above, pp. 32–33.

25. On the Grease of Dragons see below in the present chapter, and p. 169.

26. “Tin” (*xi*) occurs frequently as a synonym of lead in *waidan* texts.

27. This passage is also found in the *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.16b–17a.

28. *Shenxian jinzhuo jing*, 1.8a.

29. *Baopu zi*, 4.77 (trans. Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of A.D. 320, 81–82*).

30. For “Hard Snow,” the text collated by Wang Ming mistakenly only has *genyun*. The first edition of his work (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980; 4.68) gives the correct reading.

31. On this ceremony see above, p. 98.

32. *Taiqing jing tianshi koujue*, 1b, 1b–2a, 2a–b, 2b–3a, 3a–4a, 4a, 4a–b, respectively.

33. *Taiqing jing tianshi koujue*, 1b–2a.

34. The “flowery stone” is also mentioned in the *Sanshiliu shuifa*, 5b. Ts’ao, Ho, and Needham, “An Early Mediaeval Chinese Alchemical Text on Aqueous Solutions,” 129, suggest it may be granite (*huashi*) or talc (*huashi*). An equivalence with “tin” (i.e., lead), though, is suggested by the methods for making the Hard Snow found in both Tang anthologies of the Taiqing tradition, which use mercury and “tin” in almost identical proportions to those mentioned in the *Oral Instructions*. See *Taiqing danjing yaojue*, in *Yunji qiqian*, 71.13a (trans. Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 176–80), and *Taiqing shibi ji*, 1.5b–7a and 2.4a–b.

35. *Taiqing jing tianshi koujue*, 2b–3a; see also *Jiudan jingjue*, 9.6a–b. In another method for the Red Salt found in *Baopu zi*, 16.289–90 (trans. Ware, 273), alum and salt are used with the addition of amethyst and calcareous spar. Red Salt is obtained by refining together alum and salt also according to the commentary to the *Cantong qi wu xianglei biyao* (Secret Essentials on the Five Categories According to the *Cantong qi*; CT 905), 6a; see Ho and Needham, “Theories of Categories in Early Mediaeval Chinese Alchemy,” 186 note 85. This text adds that Red Salt is used to sublimate the “Frost and Snow” (*shuangxue*, calomel); compare the Hard Snow of the *Scripture of Great Clarity*.

36. *Taiqing jing tianshi koujue*, 4a–b. The commentary to the *Cantong qi wu xianglei biyao*, 6a, hints to the compounding of two substances called “Male and Female Snow” (*xiongci erxue*). This refers to the “male” or “female” values that can be taken on by mercury; see Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 233.

37. *Baopu zi*, 4.81 (trans. Ware, 87).

38. *Baopu zi*, 4.79 (trans. Ware, 84).

39. These elixirs are also mentioned in *Jiudan jingjue*, 8.1a–2b and 20.10b–11a.

40. As already noted above, the *Nine Elixirs* mentions the Nine Tripods in its title, but its methods are performed using an earthenware crucible (*tufu*). Earthenware tripod” (*tuding*) is a synonym of “earthenware crucible” (*tufu*) in the *Shiyao erya*, 1.5b.

41. On these texts see above, Chapter 3, and below, Appendix B.

42. The last two methods, briefly hinted at in the *Nine Elixirs*, are described in the “Secret Instructions” (*Jiudan jingjue*, 20.11b–12b).

43. The replacement of the Mysterious and Yellow with the Mysterious and White is mentioned in the “Secret Instructions” (*Jiudan jingjue*, 20.15a), the *Liquid Pearl* (*Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing*, 2.3b), and the commentary to the *Nine Elixirs* (*Jiudan jingjue*, 17.3a). On the Mysterious and White see above, p. 103.

44. *Baopu zi*, 4.82 and 4.84 (trans. Ware, 89 and 91).

45. *Shenxian jinzhuo jing*, 1a–2b, 2b–6a, 6a–7a, 7a–8a, 8a–b, respectively.

46. According to the commentary, the solution of realgar should be prepared according to the method in the *Methods of the Thirty-six Aqueous Solutions* (*Sanshiliu shuifa*). See below, pp. 188–89.

47. *Shiyao erya*, 1.1b for *xuanming longgao* (the received text has *xuanshui*

*longgao*, but a note on page 1.3a stating that selenite and quic“silver share the synonym *xuanming longgao* shows that *shui*, “water,” is an error for *ming*, “light”); 1.1b for *taiyi xunshou zhong shi* (realgar; *tai xunshou zhong shi* in the *Shiyao erya*); 1.3a for *bingshi* (calcareous spar); 1.3b for *ziyou nü* (Tur“estan salt; the *Shiyao erya* has the synonym *zinü* in an entry whose heading reads Tur“estan salt” but also includes synonyms of amethyst); 1.2b for *jinhua shi* (saltpeter; *huajin shi* in the *Shiyao erya*). For *xuanshui ye* as a secret name of the aqueous solution of magnetite see *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.13a–b.

48. Wang Kui“e, Zhongguo liandan shu zhong de “jinye” he huachi,” 59.

49. *Baopu zi*, 4.84.

50. Blac“amber sesame” in James Ware’s translation, p. 90.

51. This is reminiscent of the method suggested by Li Shaojun to Emperor Wu of the Han; see above, Chapter 1. On “eeping weapons away with an elixir see also *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.9b; on the *fangzhu* mirrors see *Baopu zi*, 3.53 (trans. Ware, 62).

52. See Chapters 1 and 3. On the other recipe see the next section in the present chapter.

53. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 1a–b, 1b–2a, 2a–b, 2b–3b, 3b–4a, 4a–5a, 5a–b, respectively.

54. On the Lead Elixir see above in the present chapter. On the transmission of the *Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles* and on the Chamber of the Divine Stove see pp. 80–81 and 95–96, respectively.

55. The passages on the final transmutation into gold and silver are quoted in *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.16b–17a.

56. See Chapter 3. For summaries of the entire method see Schafer, “The Transcendent Vitamin,” 35–37; and Stric“mann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 134–36. The whole *Numinous Writ in Purple Characters* (*Lingshu ziwen*), of which the *Elixir Flower of Langgan* was originally one section, is translated in Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 275–372; for the alchemical portion see pp. 331–39.

57. On this invocation see above, p. 83.

## CHAPTER 7

1. *Baopu zi*, 4.71 and 16.283 (trans. Ware, 70 and 262).

2. It is not difficult to single out examples of these equivocal features in the *Inner Chapters*. An example of ambiguity is Ge Hong’s summary of the method of the Golden Liquor, which is almost incomprehensible without recourse to the received text describing this method (see above, pp. 114–18). The quotation of the method for compounding the Mud of the Six-and-One (*liuyi ni*) is imprecise (see below, Appendix B). In his synopsis of the Nine Elixirs, finally, Ge Hong focuses only on the benefits of ingesting them, and entirely neglects to report the methods by which they are compounded.

3. *Baopu zi*, 17.302 and 16.288 (trans. Ware, 284 and 271).

4. See above, p. 3.

5. *Baopu zi*, 6.123–24 (trans. Ware, 112).
6. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 4a.
7. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.14a.
8. The *Wushang biyao*, j. 25 (Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 106–7), the *Dongshen badi miaojing jing* (Scripture of the Wondrous Essence of the Eight Emperors of the Cavern of Spirit; CT 640), 12a–29b, and the *Daomen dingzhi* (Prescribed Rules for the Daoist Community; CT 1224), 4.1a–7a, are among the texts that may contain parts of the original *Sanhuang wen* or of closely related texts. Several other wor“s claim to include the original talismans of the *Real Forms*. See Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 71–78; Fu“ui Kōjun, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū*, 170–78; Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō shi no kenkyū*, 277–343; and Poul Andersen, “Tal“ing to the Gods: Visionary Divination in Early Taoism (The Sanhuang Tradition),” 13–17.
9. The Director of Destinies is the deity that rules on the length of each person’s life. The god of the Great Year determines the sequence of the time cycles on earth; see Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought*, 145; and Hou Ching-lang, “The Chinese Belief in Baleful Stars,” 205–9.
10. *Baopu zi*, 19.337.
11. *Baopu zi*, 17.300 and 19.337 (trans. Ware, 282 and 316).
12. The *chimei* and *wangliang* demons haunt the mountain forests. See Kiang Chao-yuan, *Le voyage dans la Chine ancienne*, 168–216 and passim.
13. On the *Lingbao wufu xu* and its received version in the Daoist Canon (CT 388) see Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 450–58.
14. On these recipes, found in the entire second chapter of the present *Lingbao wufu xu*, see Yamada Toshia“i, “Longevity Techniques and the Compilation of the *Lingbao wufuxu*”; and Stephen Es“ildsen, *Asceticism in Early Chinese Religion*, 60–64. Yamada provides evidence that the original texts containing the recipes were produced in Shandong and were transmitted to Jiangnan at the end of the Han period. Yamada also suggests that mercury elixirs were among the drugs used against the “three worms” (*sanchong*) in the *Wufu xu*. It should be noted, however, that the *Lingbao wufu xu*, 2.4a, lists Liquid Pearl (*liuzhu*), one of the secret names of refined mercury, among the synonyms for sesame seeds (usually called *jusheng*, *huma*, or *huzi*).
15. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.7a–b, 12a, 12b, and 14a.
16. On the Traveling Cuisine see note 13 to the Introduction.
17. *Baopu zi*, 11.208.
18. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.8b.
19. *Baopu zi*, 4.74 (trans. Ware, 75). On *daoyin* see Catherine Despeux, “Gymnastics: The Ancient Tradition.”
20. *Baopu zi*, 10.184.
21. On the legend of the Yellow Emperor compounding elixirs see above, p. 42.
22. *Baopu zi*, 18.324.
23. *Baopu zi*, 18.323–24 (trans. Ware, 302–3); *Lingbao wufu xu*, 3.17b–

18a. On the Jade Hall as the residence of Laozi see *Baopu zi*, 15.273 (trans. Ware, 256).

24. On guarding the One see Kohn, “Guarding the One: Concentrative Meditation in Taoism”; Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 30–32 and 41–43; and Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 120–38.

25. The final sentence in this passage comes from *Zhuangzi*, 29/12/6. The term *ershisi sheng* is literally to refer to the twenty-four life-generating spirits,” which are devoted a text belonging to the Lingbao corpus in the Daoist Canon (*Ersbisi shengtu*, or *Charts of the Twenty-four Life-givers*; CT 1407). In the passage quoted above, I translate this term as “twenty-four generations” for its affinity to the terms “nine mutations” and “twelve transformations.” The precise referent of these various designations is unclear, but they are literally to allude to the different aspects taken by the Great One (Taiyi) within the human being, whose inner deities are deemed to be transformations of that supreme god.

26. On ubiquity and invisibility in relation to Daoist meditation practices see Robinet, “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism,” 48–50 and 51–57, respectively. On Daoist meditation methods involving the use of mirrors see Max Kaltenmark, “Miroirs magiques.” Besides the mirrors mentioned by Ge Hong, the practice of guarding the Mysterious One also relies on talismans; see, for instance, *Baopu zi*, 15.270, on the Talisman of Great Concealment (*dayin fu*; trans. Ware, 251), and 19.337 on the talismans of the Jade Women’s Concealment into Subtlety (*Yunü yinwei*; Ware, 316).

27. *Baopu zi*, 18.324.

28. *Baopu zi*, 18.326.

## CHAPTER 8

1. For studies on Tianshi dao, Shangqing, and Lingbao see notes 18, 45, and 46 to the Introduction. The new forms of alchemy that emerged from the late Six Dynasties onward are examined in Chapter 12.

2. See below, p. 205.

3. On the hierarchical arrangement of the earlier (i.e., pre-Shangqing) traditions in Tao Hongjing’s *Declarations of the Perfected* (*Zhen’gao*) see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 35–50. On the prefigurations of the Three Caverns system in Shangqing sources see 1: 75–85.

4. The term for “golden liquor” in this passage, *jinzhuo* (lit., “golden liquid”), is the same that appears in the title of the received version of the Taiqing *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*, the *Shenxian jinzhuo jing*. On the meditation practices of the *Authentic Scripture of the Great Cavern* see Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 100–103.

5. On the *waidan* methods in the *Zhen’gao* see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 44–48; and Sa’ade Yoshinobu, “Tō Kō’ei ni o’eru fu’uya’u, rentan.” Many other examples of integration of earlier doctrines, practices, and texts into Shangqing Daoism are pointed out in Robinet, 1: 7–104.

6. See Strickmann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 169–78; Robinet,

*La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 176–80; Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 289–95 (especially p. 292). It should be noted that in this respect Shangqing actually did not innovate, but developed traditions documented by earlier sources on meditation practices, especially the *Central Scripture of Laozi* (*Laozi zhongjing*) and the *Scripture of the Yellow Court* (*Huangting jing*). See my “Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy,” and Chapter 12 of the present book“.

7. Besides the two texts mentioned above, *waidan* methods are also found in the following Shangqing wor“s:

- a. *Shangqing mingjian yaojing* (Essential Scripture of the Bright Mirror of Highest Clarity; CT 1206), 4b–13b.
- b. *Dongzhen Gaoshang Yudi dadong ciyi yujian wulao baojing* (Precious Scripture on the Five Ancient Lords, Jade Seal of the Feminine One, from the Most Exalted Jade Emperor of the Cavern of Reality; CT 1313), 53b–56a and 57b–58b; also in *Yunji qiqian*, 77.1a–2a (see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 2: 77 and 272).
- c. *Dongzhen Taishang shuo zhibui xiaomo zhenjing* (Authentic Scripture to Dispel Demons through Wisdom, Spo“en by the Most High of the Cavern of Reality; CT 1344), j. 1 (see Robinet, *ibid.*, 2: 179–86).
- d. *Shangqing daobao jing* (Scripture of Highest Clarity on the Treasures of the Dao; CT 1353), 4.3b–5a (see Robinet, *ibid.*, 2: 419).
- e. *Shangqing Taishang Dijun jiuzhen zhongjing* (Central Scripture of the Nine Perfected of the Most High Imperial Lord of Highest Clarity; CT 1376), 2.8b–22b; also in *Yunji qiqian*, 68.1a–9b, 74.19a–20b, and 77.7b–10b (see Stric“mann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 171–78; and Robinet, *ibid.*, 2: 72–73).

Despite the *Shangqing* prefix in its title, it is unclear whether a sixth text that contains *waidan* methods, the *Shangqing jiuzhen zhongjing neijue* (Inner Instructions on the Central Scripture of the Nine Perfected of Highest Clarity; CT 908), is also related to the Shangqing tradition; see Robinet, *ibid.*, 1: 204. This text gives three methods for ingesting cinnabar (1a–2b), followed by the description of an offering (*jiao*) rite to the Great One (Taiyi; 2b–5b) to be performed before compounding the elixir.

8. See above, p. 39.

9. The title *Taiqing shangdao guantian neijing* is found in the last of a series of quotations from the *Dadong zhenjing* in the *Taiping yulan*, 673.8a, suggesting that the source of the alternative title is the *Dadong zhenjing* itself. The received versions of the *Dadong zhenjing* do not mention this variant title, and Robinet does not include it in the list of alternative titles of the scripture (*La révélation du Shangqing*, 2: 32).

10. See note 32 to Chapter 3.

11. *Zhen’gao*, 11.10a, 12.13b, and 14.9b. According to Tao Hongjing, the method came from the *Central Scripture of Great Clarity* (*Taiqing zhongjing*).



12. *Zhen'gao*, 14.3a.

13. *Huayang Tao yinju neizhuan* (Intimate Biography of Tao, the Retired Master of Mount Huayang; CT 300), 2.6a. See Stric“mann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 143–51.

14. See Stric“mann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 146–48. These fragments are missing in the received text of the *Dengzhen yinjue* (CT 421), but are preserved in quotations found in different chapters of the *Tai ping yulan*.

15. *Huayang Tao Yinju neizhuan*, 2.6b. See Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 11. Ge Hong had already stated that Anqi sheng and Yin Changsheng “new the Taiqing methods; see *Baopu zi*, 3.53 and 4.77 (trans. Ware, 65 and 81).

16. *Zhen'gao*, 12.3b; Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 10.

17. Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 51–57.

18. *Tai ping yulan*, 812.7a, quoting from the now-lost *Maojun neizhuan* (Inner Biography of Lord Mao). Compare *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.5a–b.

19. *Ziyang zhenren neizhuan* (Inner Biography of the Perfected of Purple Yang; CT 303), 9b; see trans. Manfred Por“ert, *Biographie d’un taoïste légendaire*, 86–87. Mount Heming (in present-day Sichuan) is especially famous for its association with Zhang Daoling. The *Illustrations*, if they ever existed, are lost; it is unclear whether they are in any way related to the scroll “separately available with illustrations and procedures” mentioned by Ge Hong in his summary of the *Nine Elixirs* (see below, Appendix B). It may be noted here that Por“ert’s statement (p. 88 note 266) that the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* includes “sexual recipes” (“recettes sexuelles”) is incomprehensible, and his suggestion that the *Nine Elixirs* shares passages with one of the main sources on sexual techniques, the *Sunü jing* (Scripture of the Pure Woman; trans. Douglas Wile, *Art of the Bedchamber*, 85–94), is quite contrary to fact.

20. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.1b and 5a–6a. On these taboos see above, pp. 85–86.

21. *Shenxian jinzhuo jing*, 2.6a; *Baopu zi*, 13.241 (trans. Ware, 215–16).

22. *Liexian zhuan*, text and annotated translation in Kaltenmar“, *Le Liesien tchouan*, 68–71. The *Scripture of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity* is cited in the bibliography of the *Baopu zi*, 19.334. On Boyang as a name of Laozi see Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, especially 29–30; and Kaltenmar“, *Le Liesien tchouan*, 60–62. *Spirit of the Lute* is also “nown as an alternative title of the *Scripture of the Yellow Court* (*Huangting jing*); see *Huangting neijing jing*, in *Yunji qiqian*, 11.2b.

23. *Ziyang zhenren neizhuan*, 5b and 9b; Andersen, *The Method of Holding the Three Ones*, 4–7. I am indebted to Lowell S“ar for this reference. Su Lin is also “nown as Zixuan, a name formed by inverting the two characters of Xuanzi’s name.

24. *Wushang biyao*, 31.5b–6a (Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 115). On the Three Caverns see above, Chapter 2.

25. For a full translation of the *Shenxian zhuan* biography of Zhang Daoling see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 349–54.

26. *Shangqing Taishang Dijun jiuzhen zhongjing*, 2.8b–18a. See Stricmann, "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching," 171–78.
27. Stricmann, "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching," 168–69.
28. *Dengzhen yinjue*, 3.11b, 3.25b, and 3.23b; *Zhen'gao*, 9.13a. See Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 70–74.
29. *Dengzhen yinjue*, 3.5b.
30. Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 73.
31. See above, p. 50.
32. Boenamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 190.
33. *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiao jieke jing* (Scripture on the Precepts and Codes of the Celestial Master's Teaching, from the Normative Scripts of Correct Unity; CT 789), 12a; trans. Boenamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 165–66. See also Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, 79–82. This cosmogony, as remarked by Boenamp (pp. 165 and 189), reflects the one outlined in *Laozi*, 42: "The Dao generates the One, the One generates the Two, the Two generate the Three, the Three generate the ten thousand things."
34. *Santian neijie jing* (Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens; CT 1205), 1.2a–3a; trans. Boenamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 207. On this work see Boenamp, pp. 186–229, which includes a detailed description of its cosmogony and a translation of the first chapter. See also Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, 82–84.
35. *Han tianshi shijia* (Lineage of the Han Celestial Masters; CT 1463), 2.1a–5b. On this work see Judith Boltz, *A Survey of Taoist Literature*, 62–64.
36. On the Four Supplements see Ōfuchi Ninji, "The Formation of the Taoist Canon," 265–67; and Boltz, *A Survey of Taoist Literature*, 7–9.
37. See above, pp. 54–55.
38. See Piet van der Loon, *Taoist Books in the Libraries of the Sung Period*, 5.
39. *Daojiao yishu*, 2.12b.

## CHAPTER 9

1. For the sentence on the Branches of Earth and the Stems of Heaven (*tiangan*) I follow the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.4a–b, and the *Sanshiliu shuifa* 12a–b, which read *fan zhigan* for *ji zhi tian*.
2. I read *yao* for *le*. Without this emendation, the passage would translate as . . . this petty man covets life (*tansheng*) and loves the Dao (*ledao*).
3. Reading *neiwai tu zhi* for *neifu zhi*.
4. *Fu* ( "to ingest") should be emended to *fu* ( "again"): the Mysterious and Yellow was already added to the Flowery Pond for the initial coating of the crucible, according to the method of the Mud of the Six-and-One given above.
5. Reading *wai* for *fu*.
6. The *Nine Elixirs* has "alum" (*fanshi*) for "arsenolite" (*yusbi*) as the last mineral in the list of ingredients. Alum, however, has already been mentioned earlier in the list, and the next sentence says that arsenolite is on top of the other ingredients. The *Liquid Pearl*, 1.15a, gives the correct reading.

7. I follow the reading of the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.15b— “keep the fire low (*wei*),” instead of “watch (*hou*) over the fire.”

8. I follow the reading of the *Liquid Pearl*, 1.15b, which has *fu zeng* for *mo zeng*.

9. The *Nine Elixirs* has “liver and gall of a yellow dog,” but the *Liquid Pearl*, 2.2a, the “Secret Instructions,” 20.14b, and the variant version of this method reported by the editor of the *Nine Elixirs* (see below) have “gall of a yellow dog.”

10. I restore the character *he*, without which the whole sentence would require a different punctuation and become incomprehensible. *He* appears in the corresponding passage of the *Liquid Pearl*, 2.2a, and in the method given above in the *Nine Elixirs*.

11. Here again I restore two missing characters (*wei fu*), which appear in the *Liquid Pearl* and in the first version of this method given above in the *Nine Elixirs*.

12. Reading *quepen* for *queweng*, as in the *Liquid Pearl*, 2.3a, and the *Baopu zi*, 4.75.

13. The text of the *Nine Elixirs* is corrupted and in part meaningless: “The elixir will be beneficial for his Yang essence and his Yin pneumas, and although he has intercourse with women he will produce a multitude of children.” To give sense to this sentence I read *qiang* (“to strengthen”) for *sui* (“although”). The *Liquid Pearl*, 2.3a, has: “If you want to generate children, add it to wild raspberries. If a ninety-year-old man ingests it, his Yang pneumas will become stronger and he can again generate a child.”

14. Reading *fudan* for *roudan*, which is the Seventh Elixir.

## CHAPTER 12

1. See note 6 to Chapter 8.

2. Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, 47–48 and 128. On Laozi as an inner deity to be visualized in meditation practices see also *Baopu zi*, 273–74 (trans. Ware, 256–57).

3. See Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, 44 and 123. The Three Luminaries are the Sun, the Moon, and the five planets (or the Northern Dipper). The Four Numina are the emblematic animals of the four directions (green dragon for the East, vermilion bird for the South, white tiger for the West, and turtle-snake for the North).

4. See Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, 58–59; Holzman, “The Wang Ziqiao Stele,” 79.

5. Trans. Bo“en“amp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 92.

6. *Bawei zhaolong miaojing* (Scripture of the Eight Awesome Powers for Summoning the Dragon [Kings]; CT 361), 2.13a. See Robinet, *Taoism*, 228.

7. Initial Green is the first stage of life after the joining of Original Yin and Yang.

8. *Laozi zhongjing*, in *Yunji qiqian* (j. 18–19), sec. 3, 11, 17, 25, 27, 30,

and 36 for the Yellow Court; sec. 3, 17, 20, 23, 26, 32, 35, 36, 45, and 50 for the Cinnabar Field; sec. 3–5, 11, 19, 23, 28, 36, 37, 39, and 40 for the Purple Chamber.

9. *Huangting jing*, Inner” version, sec. 2 for the Hut (*lu*) and the Cinnabar Field, sec. 4 for the Yellow Court, and sec. 23 for the Purple Chamber; Outer” version, 32a and 54b for the Hut, 29a, 30a, and 53b for the Yellow Court, and 29b and 30b for the Cinnabar Field.

10. For similar practices in the *Laozi zhongjing* see especially sec. 21, 30, and 34–36. Katō Chie provides an excellent guide to reading these and related passages in her *Rōshi chūkyō* to naitan shisō no genryū.”

11. *Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 51.

12. See Catherine Despeux, *Taoïsme et corps humain: Le Xiuzhen tu*, 152–58.

13. On the salivary juices and their role in the practices of the *Scripture of the Yellow Court* see Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 90–94.

14. See above, p. 97, and the translation of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*, p. 164.

15. *Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 21. The same sentence, without the reference to meditation, is found in the opening passages of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*; see *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.1a.

16. *Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 38.

17. The initial part of the passage quoted below defies a proper translation, for Laozi (the speaker of the *Central Scripture*) refers to himself in both the first and the third persons. He introduces himself as “I” (*wu*) and says that he resides in every human being (“human beings also have me,” i.e., “him”); he is, therefore, one’s own “self” (*wu*), represented by the Red Child. For similar statements see sec. 23 (“Child-Cinnabar, Original Yang, is the self”), 37 (“the stomach is the Great Granary, the residence of the Prince, the hut of the self”), 37 (“Child-Cinnabar is the self”), and 39 (“the Dao is the self”).

18. The Red Child’s father is also called Lingyang ziming, a name that in *waidan* is a synonym of mercury.

19. *Huangting jing*, Inner” version, sec. 13, 17, and 35; Outer” version, 34a.

20. On the inner pantheon of the *Dadong zhenjing* see Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 100–103.

21. Inscribing the Registers” (*leji*) refers to writing a newborn’s name in the registers of life (*shengji*).

22. This view of the gestation process and its re-enactment in meditation is the topic of the entire *Shangqing jiudan shanghua taijing zhongji jing* (Highest Clarity Scripture of the Central Record of the Higher Transformation of the Nine Elixirs into the Essence of the Embryo; CT 1382). See Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 139–43, and her *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 178–79 and 2: 171–74.

23. See Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 172–73.

24. See Robinet, “Randonnées extatiques des taoïstes dans les astres,” 159–219, and the summary in her *Taoist Meditation*, 187–200; and Esposito, “Sun-Worship in China: The Roots of Shangqing Taoist Practices of Light.”

25. Robinet, “Randonnées extatiques,” 178–84, and her *Taoist Meditation*, 193–95.

26. The brief account that follows is based on my article “The Early History of the *Zhouyi cantong qi*.” According to most commentators, the “three” in the title of the *Cantong qi* are Daoism, cosmology, and alchemy.

27. *Zhen’gao*, 12.8a–b; *Yanshi jiaxun* (Family Instructions for the Yan Clan), 2.20a (see Teng Ssu-yü, *Family Instructions for the Yen Clan*, 185); and *Jiang Wentong jihui zhu* (Collected Works of Jiang Yan, with Annotations), 3.111 (see Waley, “Notes on Chinese Alchemy,” 8).

28. On the two cosmological patterns as used in the *Token* see Pregadio, “The Representation of Time in the *Zhouyi cantong qi*”; and on the attribution of a *Cantong qi* commentary to Yu Fan see Pregadio, “The Early History of the *Zhouyi cantong qi*,” 152.

29. *Zhouyi cantong qi zhu* (Commentary to the *Zhouyi cantong qi*; CT 1004), 2.12b–13a and 2.24a for quotations of Hugang zi’s methods, and 2.13a and 2.45a–b (translated below in the present chapter) for references to the Nine Elixirs. Passages similar to those found in the *Nine Elixirs* are also in 2.3a and 2.10b–11a. On the corpus attributed to Hugang zi see Appendix C.

30. *Huangting jing*, “Inner” version, sec. 7 and 13; *Zhouyi cantong qi fenzhang zhu*, sec. 7. This and the following references to the *Cantong qi* are the number of the section in Chen Zhixu’s (1289–after 1335) recension, which is not found in the Daoist Canon but is available in about a dozen editions, including those of the *Siku quanshu* and the *Daozang jiyao*.

31. Examples of shared vocabulary include terms denoting doctrinal notions such as Huang-Lao (teachings associated to the Yellow Emperor and Laozi), *tian-dao* (Way of Heaven), *taixuan* (Great Mystery), *xuwu* (empty non-being), *wuji* (the Center), *zhonggong* (Central Palace), *sanwu* (“three fives”), and *sanguang* (three luminaries); terms related to the view of the human being such as *jingqi* (essence and pneuma), *jingshen* (essence and spirit), *jinye* (fluids and liquors), and *hunpo* (celestial soul and earthly soul); terms related to self-cultivation practices such as *zhengqi* (correct pneuma), *yangshen* (nourishing the spirit), *huxi* (breathing), *bikou* (closing the mouth), and *bise* (shutting off); and descriptive terms such as *xuanming* (mysterious and dark), *huanghu* (vague and indistinct), *cuiwei* (high and majestic), *yaotiao* (refined and secluded), *shengshuai* (flourishing and dwindling), *shencang* (deeply concealed), and *paihuai* (advancing and retiring).

32. Sec. 32 of the *Huangting jing* and sec. 7 of the *Cantong qi* allude to Laozi, 28: “Know the White, “eep to the Black,” and you will be a model to all-under-Heaven.” Sec. 35 of the *Huangting jing* and sec. 2 of the *Cantong qi* refer to a sentence in the *Xici* (Appended Commentaries) section of the *Yijing* (Boo“

of Changes), A.5: Heaven and Earth establish their positions, and change occurs between them.”

33. I approximate a literal translation of *shuji* as “pivotal mechanism,” as this is the way the term is understood in the *Cantong qi*. More exactly, *shuji* denotes in the *Scripture of the Yellow Court* the hinges of the door-shutters (or their “door-post and catch” in Paul Kroll’s translation of this passage; Kroll, *Body Gods and Inner Vision: The Scripture of the Yellow Court*, 154) that one should shut in order to protect the loci of one’s inner body.

34. These sentences are quoted from *Huangting jing*, sec. 36, 23, 34, 4, and 3, respectively; and *Zhouyi cantong qi fenzhang zhu*, sec. 30 and 8.

35. See *Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 26: “If you want to practice the Dao, you should first of all pass through the viscera and see their deities.” We have also met earlier in this chapter a similar term used in relation to the Cinnabar Fields in one of the two inscriptions dating from 165 CE.

36. See Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 187–225.

37. See Ngo, *Divination, magie et politique*, 194–96; and Kalinowskii, *Cosmologie et divination dans la Chine ancienne*, 217–19.

38. *Laozi zhongjing*, sec. 26, 28, and 42.

39. The trigram *qian*, therefore, has two meanings in alchemy: it represents not only Yang in the Yin-Yang pair but also Pure Yang, the state of oneness that comes before the division into Yin and Yang. The symbolism of lead is even more complex, as it has three levels of meaning. Native lead represents Yin containing Real Yang, and is matched by cinnabar, which represents Yang containing Real Yin. Refined lead represents Real Yang, and is matched by mercury refined from cinnabar, which represents Real Yin. However, just like the Yang trigram *qian*, refined lead also stands for Pure Yang. For this reason, “lead” is a frequent synonym of “gold” in alchemical texts, and represents the elixir itself.

40. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.4a–5b (method of the First Elixir).

41. See Chen Shaowei’s *Dadong lian zhenbao jing xiufu lingsha miaojue* (Wondrous Instructions on Fixing Cinnabar, Supplementary to the Scripture of the Great Cavern on Refining the Real Treasure; CT 890) and *Dadong lian zhenbao jing jiujuan jindan miaojue* (Wondrous Instructions on the Golden Elixir of the Nine Reversions, Supplementary to the Scripture of the Great Cavern on Refining the Real Treasure; CT 891). On Chen Shaowei’s firing process see Sivin, “Theoretical Background,” 270–74.

42. See above, p. 113.

43. On this subject see also Ren Jiyu, *Zhongguo daojiao shi*, 415–16 and Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 277.

44. *Zhouyi cantong qi fenzhang zhu*, sec. 35.

45. *Riyue xuanshu lun* (Essay on the Sun and the Moon, the Mysterious Pivot), in *Daoshu* (Pivot of the Dao; CT 1017), 26.1a–6b. A better version is found in *Quan Tangwen* (Complete Tang Prose), 334.12a–21a, with a memorial of submission to Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–56).

## APPENDIX B

1. *Sanshiliu shuifa*, 9b–10a.
2. *Jiudan jingjue*, 8.3a, 8.4a–b, and 19.2a–3b. The third method for alum in 8.3a is also found in 19.2b.
3. *Jiudan jingjue*, 19.2a.
4. *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 5a; *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.1b.
5. *Zhizhai shulu jieti*, 12.352. See van der Loon, *Taoist Books in the Libraries of the Sung Period*, 146.
6. The opening portion of the *Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing* is indicated as “missing.” It is likely to have contained lines concerning cinnabar as the origin of refined mercury, which is one of the two ingredients of the Liquid Pearl with refined lead. The final part contains materials unrelated to the Nine Elixirs.
7. The songs on the First, Second, Third, and Sixth Elixirs are transcribed in Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 294–96. Based on their rhymes, Chen suggests that the songs were written during the Han period. A rhyme system can be easily imitated, however, and is not dependable as the single criterion for dating a text.
8. The “Explanations” are in the *Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing*, 1.4a–5b. A passage not found in the *Nine Elixirs* states that “in the Xingyang and Henan districts (both in present-day Henan), in the Luoyang district (Shaanxi), and in the Yingchuan commandery (Henan), a crucible costs at most fourteen or fifteen coins” (*Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing*, 1.4b). As remarked by Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 296, these four place names do not provide any useful evidence for dating the “Explanations.”
9. *Jiudan jingjue*, 10.3b–4a. These verses also are transcribed in Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 293 (see also 312–13).
10. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.7a–15b.
11. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.7a. See also the commentary, 12.2b, and note 15 below.
12. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.11b–12b, where this portion is explicated as containing four methods. The last one, referred to very briefly in the “Secret Instructions,” is not contained in the other received texts on the Nine Elixirs.
13. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.13a–b.
14. *Shangdong xindan jingjue*, 1.9a–13b and 2.5a–15a. The title of this work may allude to the secret transmission of the alchemical doctrines (“the Saints transmit them through the heart,” 1.2b), or to the Divine Chamber (*shen-shi*), a name of the crucible, which is compared to the heart (1.9b). On the Heart Elixir see Sivin, “Theoretical Background,” 295–96. The section on the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles contains a lengthy passage on the cultivation of the inner elixir (*neidan*); see Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 435–36 note 17.
15. Traces of the original arrangement of the *Nine Elixirs* are found in two passages of the *Liquid Pearl* (*Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing*, 1.2a and

1.15b), which allude to nine rather than four cycles of heating for the First Elixir. In the commentary to a line of the “Songs,” moreover, the *Liquid Pearl* (1.2a) defines the First Elixir as Flower of Cinnabar in Nine Sublimations (*jiufei danhua*). Both details suggest that in the manuscript of the *Nine Elixirs* used for compiling the *Liquid Pearl*, the section on the First Elixir included the method for making the Liquid Pearl, which is obtained in nine cycles. The First Elixir, instead, requires only four cycles of heating.

16. The main variants are reported in my comments to the translation of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* in Chapter 9. The only passage in the *Liquid Pearl* that does not correspond in any way to the version of the *Nine Elixirs* in the *Jiudan jingjue* contains a warning on the unauthorized transmission of the text (1.7a).

17. *Baopu zi*, 4.74–76 (trans. Ware, 75–78). On the Mud of the Six-and-One see above, Chapter 6.

18. See the translation of the corresponding passage of the *Nine Elixirs* above, p. 166. Matching the *Baopu zi* passage with the received version of the *Nine Elixirs* requires correction of two mistakes. First, *fanshi shui* “礬石水 (an aqueous solution of alum)” should be emended into *dansha shui, fanshi* “丹砂水、礬石 (. . . an aqueous solution of cinnabar. [Then] with alum . . .”). Solutions of both realgar and cinnabar are used in the *Nine Elixirs* to make the Mysterious and Yellow, while alum (*fanshi*) is one of the ingredients of the Mud of the Six-and-One. Second, white lead should not be included among the ingredients of the Mud of the Six-and-One, which are seven (alum, Turkestan salt, lead salt, arsenolite, oyster shells, red clay, and talc). Both the received *Nine Elixirs* and the related texts clearly state that white lead is used to prepare a second, separate layer of mud that covers the crucible. Despite this error, Ge Hong’s report provides further evidence that the method of the Six-and-One (and, most likely, also the method of the Mysterious and Yellow) was originally found within the section of the text concerned with the First Elixir.

19. For analyses of the chemistry of the Flower of Cinnabar based on the *Baopu zi* see Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 83–85; and Murauchi Yoshiaki, “Ren’in jutsu,” 314–23.

20. *Baopu zi*, 16.292.

21. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.1b, 1.3a, and 20.3a–b, respectively; see above, p. 82, for the Mysterious Woman and the Great One, and p. 97 for Laozi.

22. Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 2: 11.

23. *Taiqing jinye shendan jing*, 1.15b–16b.

24. *Chongwen zongmu*, 10.1b. See van der Loon, *Taoist Books in the Libraries of the Sung Period*, 118.

25. Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 289–92. See note 7 above.

26. *Baopu zi*, 11.200 and 201 (trans. Ware, 182–83 and 183–84); *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 7a. On the *zhi* see above, p. 50.

27. *Shangqing daobao jing* (CT 1353), 4.9b; *Maoshan zhi* (CT 304), 19.1a–b.



28. *Wushang biyao* (CT 1138), 78.3a–4a (Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao*, 181).
29. *Shangqing mingjian yaojing* (CT 1206), 8b–13a.
30. *Jinshi bu wujiu shu jue* (CT 907), 2a, 7b, 7b–8a, and 8a; compare *Taiqing danjing yaojue*, in *Yunji qiqian*, 71.4b, 14b, 7a, and 6a (trans. Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 161, 179, 165, and 163).
31. Trans. Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 179 (transliteration and other conventions changed).
32. Trans. Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 180 (transliteration and other conventions changed).
33. For more details on the passages shared by the three texts mentioned above see Pregadio, “A Wor“ on the Materia Medica in the Taoist Canon,” 149–51.

## APPENDIX C

1. On the ceremony of transmission of the *Scripture of Great Clarity* and the talismans reproduced in this and other chapters of the commentary see above, Chapter 5. On Hugang zi see below in the present appendix.
2. The preliminary practices for arranging the ritual space also include setting up the laboratory, which is described in chapter 7 of the commentary.
3. Cinnabar is mentioned here as the mineral from which one refines mercury.
4. See above, pp. 102–3.
5. *Jiudan jingjue*, 8.4b–5a.
6. *Jiudan jingjue*, 8.5a–8b.
7. On the *Chu jinkuang tulu* and the other texts attributed to Hugang zi see below in the present appendix.
8. *Jiudan jingjue*, 9.2b–3a, 3b–4b, and 7a. Other passages, such as those on “red salt” (*chiyan*, 9.6a–b) and on fuel (9.9b), are related to the three central methods. On some methods described in this chapter see Zhao Kuanghua, “Hugang zi ji qi dui Zhongguo gudai huaxue de zhuoyue gongxian,” 189–201; Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 228–29; and Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 5.III: 58–60.
9. Li“e other terms that commonly denote minium, *qiandan* also refers to refined lead. See above, p. 171.
10. *Jiudan jingjue*, 11.6a–b for alchemical mercury (a sentence in 9.1a shows that “mercury” here is the Mysterious Pearl), 12.3a for the Essence of Lead, and 11.7a–b (= 12.3a–4a) for their conjunction.
11. See above, pp. 102–3.
12. *Jiudan jingjue*, 11.2b–4b and 12.4a–6a. On some methods described in these two chapters see Zhao Kuanghua, “Hugang zi ji qi dui Zhongguo gudai huaxue de zhuoyue gongxian,” 201–6; and Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 89, 230–35, 245–46.
13. *Jiudan jingjue*, 13.1a.
14. See above, p. 100.

15. *Jiudan jingjue*, 13.2a–b. On Li Shaojun’s method see above, Chapter 1. The passage on gold and cinnabar is translated in Sivin, “Theoretical Background,” 247.

16. The last three substances are used as solvents. There are some identical methods in chapters 8 and 16; see note 26 below, and my comments to the translation of the *Scripture of the Golden Liquor*, p. 189. “Stone spleen” is attested as a synonym of la“e salt; see *Shiyao erya*, 1.3b.

17. On the Mysterious and Yellow, the Mysterious and White, and the Flowery Pond see above, Chapter 5.

18. On the taboos and the interdictions listed in this chapter see pp. 85–86. On the “Secret Written Instructions” see above, Appendix B.

19. The possible exception is the first of three methods for the solution of cinnabar given in *Jiudan jingjue*, 8.4a–b; compare *Baopu zi*, 16.289 (trans. Ware, 272). It is unclear whether this is a direct quotation. Passages quoted from the *Baopu zi* also appear in chapters 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, and 20 of the *Jiudan jingjue*.

20. See Zhao Kuanghua, “Hugang zi ji qi dui Zhongguo gudai huaxue de zhuoyue gongxian”; and Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 303–9. On the origins of Hugang zi’s lineage see Pregadio, “The Early History of the *Zhouyi cantong qi*,” 162.

21. The *Fu xuanzhu jue* is quoted in chapters 3, 8, 11, 12, and 17 of the commentary. On compounding the Mysterious Pearl with gold, silver, and the Essence of Lead, see 11.6b–7b; on its fixing, 11.7b and 8b–9b; on removing its toxicity, 11.9a–b. The methods for the solution of alum and the Vinegar of the Three Cycles are in 8.3b and 17.5a–b, respectively. Both of them are used at the end of the method of the Mysterious Pearl.

22. The *Wujin fen tujue* is quoted in chapters 3, 11, and 12 of the commentary. Some methods in chapters 18 and 19, related to those mentioned above, also may come from this text. The ceremony of transmission is described in 3.5b–6a. The title of this work is listed in *Shiyao erya*, 2.3a, and in *Daozang quejing mulu* (Catalogue of Missing Texts in the Daoist Canon; CT 1430), 2.5a. Passages from the *Wujin fen tujue* are also quoted in the *Taigu tudui jing* (Scripture of Great Antiquity on Metals and Stones; CT 949), 1.2b–3a; in the anonymous *Zhouyi cantong qi zhu* (Commentary to the *Zhouyi cantong qi*; CT 1004), 2.24a; and in the *Longhu huandan jue* (Instructions on the Reverted Elixir of the Dragon and Tiger; CT 909), 1.16b. See Zhao Kuanghua, “Hugang zi ji qi dui Zhongguo gudai huaxue de zhuoyue gongxian,” 201–10; and Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 303–9 passim.

23. *Jiudan jingjue*, 9.1b.

24. The *Wanjin jue* is cited in the *Suishu*, 34.1048. For the method of the Flowery Pond see *Jiudan jingjue*, 17.6b. The passage on the ceremony of transmission is on 3.6a–b. Here Hugang zi, under the name Huqiu, appears as the master of Ge Hong’s granduncle, Ge Xuan.

25. *Shiyao erya*, 2.5a and 2.3a, respectively.

26. On saltpeter see *Jiudan jingjue*, 8.8a–b; on epsomite, 8.5b (= 16.8b–9a); on the stone spleen,” 8.7a–b (= 16.9b); and on Tur“estan salt, 8.6a (= 16.10a). The passage of the commentary that supports the attribution of these methods to the *Heche jing* is in 8.8a–b. On the use of the River Chariot in the crucible see *Jiudan jingjue*, 12.1a; and Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 234.

27. See note 2 to Appendix B.

28. *Jiudan jingjue*, 3.4a–b, 5.10a, 7.6a–b, 17.3a–b, 17.4b–5a, respectively. A spell to be uttered after tracing one of the reproduced talismans is quoted on 19.4b–5 as coming from the *Taiqing shendan baojing* (Precious Scripture on the Divine Elixir of Great Clarity). On the preparation of the crucible, the Mysterious and White, and the Flowery Pond see Chapter 6. On the ceremony of transmission and the Medicine for Expelling the Demons (*quegui yao*) see pp. 81 and 87–88.

29. *Jiudan jingjue*, 20.1b and 20.16b–17a; and *Jiuzhuan huandan jing yaojue*, 5a and 3b. See above, pp. 83 and 106–7.

30. *Jiudan jingjue*, 7.2a–b and 7.3b–4a; and *Langgan huandan shangjing*, 3b–4a. See above, p. 96.

31. Cao Yuanyu, “Zhongguo gudai jindanjia de shebei ji fangfa,” 69.

32. Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 2: 301, 5.III: 57, 5.IV: 2 (Table 114), and 5.VII: 97.

33. Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 377. Unli“e his study published in 1983 quoted below, Chen does not state which place names he refers to.

34. Wang Kui“e, “Zhongguo liandan shu zhong de ‘jinye’ he huachi,” 57 note 2; Zhang Zigao, *Zhongguo huaxue shigao (Gudai zhi bu)*, 118; Zhang Zigao, *Zhongguo gudai huaxue shi*, 213.

35. Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 188 note 83.

36. Zhao Kuanghua, “Hugang zi ji qi dui Zhongguo gudai huaxue de zhuyue gongxian,” 187; Zhao Kuanghua, “Woguo gudai de fanhuaxue,” 481; Meng Naichang, “Zhongguo liandan shu yuanzhu pingjie,” 75; Meng Naichang, *Daojiao yu Zhongguo liandan shu*, 59–60; Ho Peng Yo“e, *Li, Qi and Shu*, 57. Two other wor“s by Zhao Kuanghua merely indicate the Tang period as the date of compilation: see Zhao Kuanghua, “Woguo gudai ‘chousha lianhong’ de yanjin ji qi huaxue chengjiu,” 136; and Zhao Kuanghua and Luo Meng, “Guanyu woguo gudai qude danzhi shen de jinyibu quezheng he shiyan yanjiu,” 55.

37. Zhu Sheng, “Woguo gudai zai wuji suan, jian he youji suan, shengwu jian fangmian de yixie chengjiu,” 514. On Hugang zi see above in the present appendix.

38. Sivin, “Theoretical Bac“ground,” 218 note *a*. See *Jiudan jingjue*, 16.4b.

39. *Jiudan jingjue*, 14.2a–b. For the geographical monograph referred to by Sivin see note 55 below.

40. Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu xukao*, 329. On the *Xinxiu bencao* as a possible source of the *Jiudan jingjue* see below in the present appendix. As we shall see, whether this text was or was not among the sources of the commentary is virtually irrelevant for dating the *Jiudan jingjue*.

41. *Jiudan jingjue*, 13.3b.
42. For the date of establishment of the Jinzhou prefecture, Chen refers to the *Xin Tangshu* (New History of the Tang Dynasty), 41.1073.
43. *Chongwen zongmu*, 9.18a.
44. *Songshi*, 205.5193.
45. *Tongzhi lüe* (Monographs from the Comprehensive History of Institutions), 43.22a.
46. For instance, a note at the beginning of *juan* 1 states that it includes *juan* 2 (*er tong juan*), and so forth.
47. *Jiudan jingjue*, 8.7b, 10.1a and 2b, 16.6b, 10a, and 11a.
48. *Jiudan jingjue*, 6.2a, 8.10b, 15.3b, 16.5b, and 18.1a. In the commentary, Tao Hongjing is sometimes called Tao Yinju or Tao Ming, an abbreviated form of one of his appellations, Tao Tongming.
49. *Jiudan jingjue*, 12.6a. On the weight units according to the “large system” see Sivin, *Chinese Alchemy*, 73.
50. *Jiudan jingjue*, 13.3b on cinnabar, 15.3b on laminar malachite, 15.5b on nodular malachite, 16.1b on magnetite, and 16.4b on alum. I emend “Jianzhou” 蘭州 into Lanzhou 蘭州 following the reading of *Xinxiu bencao*, [3.]100, which in the entry on malachite mentions the same four names in the same order as in the *Jiudan jingjue*.
51. *Jiu Tangshu* (Ancient History of the Tang Dynasty), 41.1671. Here and in the following notes I provide references to the *Jiu Tangshu*, whose treatise provides more details on administrative geography than does the corresponding treatise in the *Xin Tangshu*. The treatise in the *Xin Tangshu* is, nevertheless, valuable for its indications of natural substances occurring in each region; see Edward Schafer and Benjamin Wallac“er, “Local Tribute Products of the T’ang Dynasty.”
52. *Jiu Tangshu*, 40.1633, 40.1601, 40.1610, and 30.1483.
53. There is a one-year difference between the date given in the *Jiu Tangshu*, 40.1622, for the establishment of Mayang (620), and the one given in both the *Jiu Tangshu*, 40.1621, and the *Xin Tangshu*, 41.1073, for the establishment of Chenzhou (621).
54. *Jiu Tangshu*, 41.1663. Yizhou was renamed Shu Commandery (Shujun) in 742, and Chengdu Prefecture (Chengdu fu) in 757 (Zhide 2).
55. *Sichuan tongzhi* (Comprehensive Monograph on Sichuan), ed. of 1736, 2.3b–4a and 2.5b; ed. of 1816, 2.20b–21a. I have been unable to consult the edition of this work published in 1730 that is referred to by Sivin. The chapters on administrative geography of two other monographs that I have seen, the *Sichuan zongzhi* (General Monograph on Sichuan; ed. of 1619) and the *Chengdu xianzhi* (Monograph on the Chengdu District; ed. of 1816), do not contain useful details.
56. *Jiu Tangshu*, 41.1665, 1666, and 1667.
57. *Shi* 世 is replaced with *dai* 代 (5.1b), *su* 俗 (2.2a, 2.6a, 3.2a), and *ren* 人 (5.1a). It is not replaced only in the consecrated phrase *dushi* 度世 (to tran-

scend the generations [of mortals],” 5.1b), and in the name of the immortal Chen Anshi 陳安世 (5.5a). *Dai* 代 also repeatedly appears in the commentary (e.g., 2.4a, 3.4a, 3.5a, 3.6b, 10.1a, 11.1a, 18.4a, 20.10a). *Su* 俗 occurs three times in the main text of the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* (1.2b and 1.6a).

58. *Min* 民 is replaced with *ren* 人 in 6.2a (two times) and 6.2b.

59. *Zhi* 治 is replaced with *li* 理 (6.2a, two times), *zheng* 政 (4.3a), *yu* 愈 (4.1b), *liao* 療 (20.17b), *ying* 營 (2.6b), and *xiu* 修 (6.2a). It is omitted in three other instances (5.2a, 5.7b, and 8.4a). It is not replaced in one occurrence of the phrase *zhiguo* 治國 (5.1a); however, two other occurrences of this phrase in passages coming from the *Baopu zi* (*Jiudan jingjue*, 6.2a) are replaced by *liguo* 理國. On 19.3a, *li* 理 also replaces *zhi* 治 in a quotation from the *Sanshiliu shuifa*.

60. See A“ahori A“ira, Yahō o meguru mondai,” 129; and Mura“ami Yoshimi, Kanbo shin hatsugen no isho to *Hōbokushi*,” 389–93.

61. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.6a, 1.8b, and twice in 1.9b. Note also that a passage of the *Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing*, 2.13b, reads *ye* 治 where the *Scripture of the Nine Elixirs* has *zhi* 治 (*Jiudan jingjue*, 1.8b).

62. *Jiudan jingjue*, 1.5b, 1.6b (three times), and 1.13b.

63. *Jiudan jingjue*, 2.6b ( Today the world is quiet and peaceful”), 8.4b–5a ( Today the Four Seas are clear and free”), 14.2a–b ( Today a saintly sovereign has unified the world, and the Nine Provinces are free from disturbances”).

64. *Xinxiu bencao* [3.]100 and 101.

65. See the list in Table 6.

GLOSSARY

- Ai shiming* 哀時命  
*aka iro no tsuchi* 赤色の土  
*akai iro* 赤い色  
*Anqi sheng* 安期生
- Ba 巴  
*Ba Yue zhi chishi* 巴越之赤石  
*bacun fu* 八寸符  
*badou* 巴豆  
*Bagong* 八公  
*bai fanshi* 白礬石  
*Bai xiansheng* 白先生  
*baicao hua* 百草花  
*baidu* 百毒  
*baigui* 百鬼  
*baihui huali* 百卉花醴  
*baila* 白蠟  
*baimai* 百脈  
*baishi ying* 白石英  
*baishi zhi* 白石脂  
*baixie* 百邪  
*baixue* 白雪  
*Baize* 白澤  
*baizheng* 百蒸  
*baji* 八極
- Bantong* 板桐  
*bao, yi, zhuan, zhi, fa* 保, 義, 專, 制, 伐  
*bao qi taiqing zhi ben* 抱其太清之本  
*baohua* 寶華  
*baohuang* 抱黃  
*Baopu zi neipian* 抱朴子內篇  
*Baopu zi shenxian jinzhuo jing* 抱朴子神仙金鈞經  
*baozhen fu* 寶鎮符  
*basu zhenlu* 八素真籙  
*baxuan* 八玄  
*beidou* 北斗  
*Beiyin dadi* 北陰大帝  
*Bencao jing jizhu* 本草經集注  
*benjing* 本經  
*bianhua* 變化  
*bie* 別  
*bigu* 辟穀  
*bigua* 辟卦  
*bikou* 閉口  
*bingchen* 丙辰  
*bingshen* 丙申  
*bingshi* 冰石  
*bingwu* 丙午

- bingxu* 丙戌  
*bise* 閉塞  
*bixian dan* 辟仙丹  
 Boyang 伯陽  
   *Bucong zi* 不蔥子  
*bugang* 步罡  
*Buye cheng* 不夜城
- can* 參  
 Cao Cao 曹操  
*caomu zhi yao* 草木之藥  
*cengqing* 曾青  
*ceyin* 側隱  
*cha* 察  
 Changjiang 長江  
 Changsha 長沙  
*chanü* 姪女  
*chen* 辰  
*chen an, chen wen* 臣按, 臣聞  
 Chen Anshi 陳安世  
 Chen Shaowei 陳少衛  
 Chen Zhixu 陳致虛  
 Chengdu fu 成都府  
 Chengshan 成山  
*chengyun* 乘雲  
 Chenzhou 辰州  
*chi* 赤  
*chimei* 魑魅  
 Chiming 赤明  
*chiqi* 赤氣  
*chishi zhi* 赤石脂  
 Chisong zi 赤松子  
   *Chisong zi zhouhou yaojue* 赤松子肘後藥訣  
*chitu fu* 赤土釜  
*chixin* 赤心  
*chixin wuwei* 赤心無偽
- chiyan* 赤鹽  
 Chiyong 蚩尤  
*chizi* 赤子  
 Chong Shang 充尚  
*chongdao / zhongdao* 重道  
*Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目  
*chongzhi* 蟲汁  
*chou* 丑  
*chu* (days of removal) 除  
 Chu (state) 楚  
*Chu jinkuang tulu* 出金礦圖錄  
*Chuci* 楚辭  
*chun* 春  
*chun kujiu* 淳苦酒  
*chun zuowei* 淳左味  
*chunyang* 純陽  
 Chunyu Shutong 淳于叔通  
 Chunyu Taixuan 淳于太玄  
*Chuze jing* 楚澤經  
 Chuze xiansheng 楚澤先生  
*cibuang* 雌黃  
*cishi* 磁石  
*cuiwei* 崔巍  
*cun* (to gauge) 忖  
*cun* (to preserve) 存  
*cunzhen* 存真
- da banxia* 大半夏  
 Da daojun 大道君  
*Da Song Tiangong baozang* 大宋天宮寶藏  
 Dachi tian 大赤天  
*Dadong zhenjing* 大洞真經  
*dahun* 大渾  
*daizhe* 代赭  
 Daluo tian 大羅天  
*daming* 大明

- dan* (bare) 檀  
*dan* (cinnabar; elixir) 丹  
*dan* (dawn) 旦  
*dan* (only, merely, simply) 但  
*dan* (a simple garment) 禪  
*dan* (sincere, real, true) 亶  
*dan* (single, alone, simple) 單  
*danbao* 丹寶  
*dancheng* 丹誠  
Dangshan 宕山  
*danhua* 丹華  
*danhua zhi huang* 丹華之黃  
*danhuang zhi hua* 丹黃之華  
*danjin* 丹金  
*danjin zhengjue* 丹金正訣  
*danjing* 丹精  
*dankuan* 丹款  
*danlu* (Cinnabar Hut) 丹廬  
*danlu* (elixir furnace) 丹爐  
*danniao* 丹鳥  
*danqi* 丹氣  
*danqian* 丹鉛  
Danqiu 丹丘  
*dansha* 丹砂, 丹沙  
*dansha jing* 丹砂精  
*dansha wan* 丹砂丸  
*danshi* (Chamber of the Elixirs) 丹室  
*danshi* (cinnabar stone) 丹石  
*danshu* 丹書  
*dantian* 丹田  
*danwu* 丹屋  
*danxin* (cinnabar heart) 丹心  
*danxin* (simple, sincere) 單心  
*dao* (to pound) 搗  
Dao (Way) 道  
*Daode jing* 道德經  
Daode tianzun 道德天尊  
Daode zhangren 道德丈人  
*daogui* 刀圭  
*daojia* 道家  
Daojiao sandong zongyuan” 道教三洞宗元  
*Daojiao yishu* 道教義樞  
Daojun 道君  
*daoshi* 道士  
*daoshu* 道術  
*daoyao ren* 搗藥人  
*daoyin* 導引  
*Daozang* 道藏  
*daqing* 大清  
*Daqing jing* 大清經  
*dasheng* 大升  
*dasheng, zhongsheng, xiaosheng* 大乘, 中乘, 小乘  
*datong* 大通  
*dayao shi* 大藥室  
*dayin fu* 大隱符  
*de* 德  
*dengshan fu* 登山符  
*Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣  
*deye* 德業  
*di* 帝  
*dian* (alchemical projection) 點  
*dian* (convulsions) 癲  
*diman* 帝男  
*dingchou* 丁丑  
Dinghu 鼎湖  
*dingsi* 丁巳  
*dinü* 帝女  
*diqu* (deities of the earth) 地祇  
*diqu* (pneuma of the earth) 地氣  
*diwang* 帝王  
*dixian* 地仙  
*dizhi* 地支



- dizi* 弟子  
*dong mingji* 洞冥寂  
*dongfang* 洞房  
 Donghai 東海  
 Dongming 東明  
 Dongshen 洞神  
*dongtian, Dongtian* 洞天  
 Dongwang fu 東王父  
 Dongxuan 洞玄  
 Dongzhen 洞真  
*Dongzhen Gaoshang Yudi dadong*  
*ciyi yujian wulao baojing* 洞真高  
 上玉帝大洞雌一玉檢五老寶經  
*Dongzhen Taishang shuo zhihui*  
*xiaomo zhenjing* 洞真太上說智  
 慧消魔真經  
*dou* 斗  
*du* 度  
 Du Guangting 杜光庭  
*duan* 鍛  
 Duan Yucan 段玉裁  
*duangu* 斷穀  
*Duming miaojing* 度命妙經  
*dunjia* 遁甲  
*dushi* 度世  
  
*er tong juan* 二同卷  
*erdan* 餌丹  
*ershisi sheng* 二十四生  
*ershui* 二水  
 Ezhou 鄂州  
  
*fan* 返  
*fan zhiban* 反支干 (recte: *ji zhi tian*  
 及支天)  
*fang* 方  
*fangshi* 方士  
*fangyuan jingcun* 方圓徑寸  
  
*fangyuan yicun* 方圓一寸  
*fangzhong, fangzhong shu* 房中, 房  
 中術  
*fangzhu* 方諸  
*fanshi* 礬石  
*fantai* 反胎  
 Feidan zuowu fa” 飛丹作屋法  
*feifu* 飛符  
*feijing* 飛精  
*feiliu* 飛流  
*feiqing* 飛輕  
*fen* 分  
*feng* 封  
 Fengbo 風伯  
 Fengdu 豐都  
 Fenghou 風后  
*fengji* 封幾  
*fenxing huaying* 分形化景  
*fenxing zhi dao* 分形之道  
*fu* 服 (recte: *wai* 外)  
*fu* (again) 復  
*fu* (crucible) 釜  
*fu* (talisman) 符  
*fu* (to fix) 伏  
*fu* (to ingest) 服  
*fu* (to submit; to fix) 伏  
*fu* (to support; supplement) 輔  
 Fu Qian 服虔  
 Fu Xi 伏羲  
*Fu xuanzhu jue* 伏玄珠訣  
*fu zeng* 復增  
*fu zhu caomu yao* 服諸草木藥  
*fudan* 伏丹  
*fujie* 伏結  
 Fulin 扶林  
*fushi* 符室  
*futu* 符圖  
*fuzi* 附子

- gan* 干  
*gan er ying* 感而應  
*ganling* 感靈  
*gao* 告, 誥  
 Gaoyang 高陽  
 Gaozong 高宗  
*ge* (each) 各  
 Ge" ( Songs") 歌  
 Ge Hong 葛洪  
 Ge Xuan 葛玄  
*geng* 庚  
*gengshen* 更申  
*gengyin* 庚寅  
*gengzi* 庚子  
*genxue* 艮雪  
*genyun* 艮雲 (recte: *genxue* 艮雪)  
*gong* 宮  
*gongfeng* 供奉  
*gonghou* 公侯  
 Gongxian 公先  
*gu* 谷  
*guan* (contemplation) 觀  
*guan* (to irrigate) 灌  
 Guangcheng zi 廣成子  
*guangming sha* 光明砂  
*guangyao* 光耀  
 Guanzi 管子  
*guichou* 癸丑  
*guihai* 癸亥  
 Guiji 會稽  
*guijia* 龜甲  
*guijian* 鬼箭  
*guijiu* 鬼臼  
*guimao* 癸卯  
*guishen* 鬼神  
*guisi* 癸巳  
*guiwei* 癸未  
*guiyou* 癸酉  
*guo* 鍋  
*guxu* 孤虛  
*guyang* 孤陽  
*guyin* 孤陰  
  
*hai* 亥  
 Han Jingdi 漢景帝  
*Han tianshi shijia* 漢天師世家  
 Han Wudi 漢武帝  
*Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳  
 Han Zhong 韓終  
*handan* 寒丹  
*hangxie* 沆瀣  
*Hanshu* 漢書  
*hanzi* 漢字  
*hao* 號  
*he* 和  
 Hebo 河伯  
*hebo yu, hebo yuyu* 河伯餘, 河伯  
 餘魚  
*heche* 河車  
*Heche jing* 河車經  
*hehe fangpi fa* 合和防辟法  
*heling* 河靈  
 Heming shan 鶴鳴山  
 Henan 河南  
 Hengshan 衡山  
 Heze 荷澤  
*hong* 汞  
*hong, dan, zhu, chi, jiang* 紅, 丹, 朱,  
 赤, 絳  
*Hongbao yuanbi shu* 鴻寶苑祕術  
*hongshui* 汞水  
*hou* 候  
*Hou Hanshu* 後漢書  
*housheng* 後聖  
*houtian* 後天  
 Hu (character in the *Zhuangzi*) 忽

- hua* (flower; efflorescence) 華  
*hua* (transformation) 化  
*huachi* 華池  
*huagai* 華蓋  
 Huainan 淮南  
 Huainan zi, *Huainan zi* 淮南子  
*huajin shi* 化金石  
*huajing* 華精  
*huan* 還  
*huan hunpo sheng* 喚魂魄聲  
*huandan* 還丹  
*huandan zhidao* 還丹至道  
*huang huachi* 黃華赤  
 Huang Hui 黃暉  
 Huang-Lao 黃老  
*huangbai* 黃白  
*huangbai shu* 黃白術  
 Huangchang zi 黃裳子  
*huangdan* 黃丹  
 Huangdi 黃帝  
*Huangdi jiuding* 黃帝九鼎  
*Huangdi jiuding da huandan* 黃帝九鼎大還丹  
*Huangdi jiuding dan* 黃帝九鼎丹  
*Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* 黃帝九鼎神丹經訣  
*Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經  
*Huangdi sishan san* 黃帝四扇散  
*Huangdi yutai pian* 黃帝玉台篇  
*huangfen* 黃分  
*huangfu* 黃服  
*huanggou dadan* 黃狗大膽  
*huanghu* 恍惚  
*huanghua* 黃華  
*huangjin* 黃金  
*huangjing* 黃精  
*huanglong* 黃龍  
*huangqing* 黃輕  
 Huangren 皇人  
*huangting* 黃庭  
*Huangting jing* 黃庭經  
*huangtu* 黃土  
*huangtu ou* 黃土甌  
*huangya* 黃芽  
*huashi* ( *flowery stone* ) 華石  
*huashi* (granite) 花石  
*huashi* (talc) 滑石  
*hufen* 胡粉  
 Hugang zi 狐剛子  
*Hugang zi he funi fa* 狐剛子和釜泥法  
 Hugang zi zao danyao jinshen” 狐剛子造丹藥禁慎  
*huizi* 迴紫  
*huma, huzi* 胡麻, 胡子  
*hun* (celestial soul) 魂  
*hun* (mur“y) 渾  
 Hun Nixi 混泥洗  
*hundun* 渾沌  
*hunpo* 魂魄  
*huohou* 火候  
*huojing* 火精  
*huqi* 榲漆  
 Huqiu 狐丘  
*huxi* 呼吸  
 Huxian 戶縣  
  
*Ishinpō* 醫心方  
  
*ji* (ceremony) 祭  
*ji* (to inquire) 稽  
*Ji Ni zi* 計倪子  
*Ji Ran zi* 計然子  
*jia* (a celestial stem”) 甲

- jia* (lineage) 家  
*jialong* 駕龍  
*jian* 建  
*jianchu* 建除  
*Jiang Yan* 江淹  
*jianggong* 絳宮  
*jianggong jinque* 絳宮金闕  
*jiangling zhu'er* 降陵朱兒  
*jianjie jingwei* 漸階精微  
*Jiannan dao* 劍南道  
*Jianzhou* 劍州  
   *Jianzhou*” 蘭州 (recte: Lanzhou  
   蘭州)  
*jiao* 醮  
*jiaogang* 交罡  
*jiashen* 甲申  
*jiawu* 甲午  
*jiayin* 甲寅  
*jiazi* 甲子  
   *Jie*” ( Explanations”) 解  
*jie* (“alpas) 劫  
*jie* (precepts) 戒  
*jiejie* 結節  
*jin* (charms) 禁  
*jin* (gold) 金  
*jin* (unit of weight) 斤  
*jindan* 金丹  
*jindan dayao* 金丹大藥  
*jindan zai zi xing* 金丹在子形  
*jindan zhi dao* 金丹之道  
   *Jinding jiudan zhi jing*” 金鼎九丹  
   之經  
*jing* (cavity, well) 井  
*jing* (celestial domain) 境  
*jing* (essence) 精  
*jing* (scripture) 經  
*jingdao* 鏡道  
*jingfei* 精飛  
*jinghua* 精華  
*jingmei* 精魅  
*jingong* 金公  
*jinguan* 金關  
*jingqi* 精氣  
*Jingshan* 荆山  
*jingshe* 精舍  
*jingshen* 精神  
*jinhua* 金花  
*Jinhua lou* 金華樓  
*jinhua shi* 金化石  
*jinjing* (Golden Essence) 金精  
*jinjing* (utterly pure) 盡精  
*jinli* 金醴  
*jinlou* 金樓  
*Jinmen* 金門  
*Jinque dijun* 金闕帝君  
*jinren* 金人  
*jinsbi* 金室  
*Jinshi bu wujiu shu jue* 金石簿五九  
   數訣  
*jinshui* 金水  
*jin Yao* 金藥  
*jin ye* (fluids and liquors) 津液  
*jin ye* (Golden Liquor) 金液  
*Jin ye dan jing* 金液丹經  
*Jin ye jing* 金液經  
*Jin ye shendan jing* 金液神丹經  
*Jin Zhou* 錦州  
*jin Zhuo* 金鈞  
*jisi* 己巳  
   *Jiu danqian xuanzhu fa*” 九丹鉛  
   玄珠法  
*Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書  
*jiu xianfa* 九仙法  
*jiubian* 九變

- jiuchong* 九重  
*jiudan* 九丹  
*jiudan ji* 九丹祭  
*Jiudan jing* 九丹經  
 Jiuding dan yin wenjue” 九鼎丹隱  
 文訣  
*Jiuding danjing* 九鼎丹經  
*Jiuding shendan tu* 九鼎神丹圖  
*jiufei danhua* 九飛丹華  
*jiufei shuiyin* 九飛水銀  
*Jiugong* 九宮  
*Jiugong shangshu* 九宮尚書  
*jiuguang dan* 九光丹  
*jiuhua dan* 九華丹  
*jiuhua dayao* 九華大藥  
*jiujing* 九精  
*Jiulao xianjun* 九老仙君  
*Jiulao yuquan* 九老玉券  
*jiutian* 九天  
*jiutian shendan* 九天神丹  
*Jiutian Xuannü* 九天玄女  
 Jiutian Yuandao jun jiufang zhi  
 shangjing” 九天元道君九方之  
 上經  
*jiutian zhi qi* 九天之氣  
*jiuyi* 九一  
*Jiuyuan jun* 九元君  
 Jiuzhuan fa” 九轉法  
*jiuzhuan huandan* 九轉還丹  
*Jiuzhuan huandan jing* 九轉還丹經  
*jiuzhuan liuzhu* 九轉流珠  
*Jiuzhuan liuzhu shenxian jiudan jing*  
 九轉流珠神仙九丹經  
*jiuzhuan shendan* 九轉神丹  
*jiuzhuan zhi hua* 九轉之華  
*jiuzhuan, Jiuzhuan”* 九轉  
 Jiuzhuan zhi jue” 九轉之訣  
*jiwei* 己未
- Juanzi* 涓子  
*jue* 訣  
*jusheng* 巨勝  
  
*kai* 開  
*kaishan fu* 開山符  
*kan* 坎  
*kao* 考  
*kemeng shu* 科盟書  
*kong* 空  
*kongqing* 空青  
*Kongtong shan* 崆峒山  
*koujue* 口訣  
*kui* 揆  
*kujiu* 苦酒  
*kun* 坤  
*Kunlun* 崑崙  
  
*lai* 癩  
*Langfeng* 閩風  
*langgan* 琅玕  
*langgan huadan* 琅玕華丹  
*Langgan huadan jing* 琅玕華丹經  
*Lanlan* 藍藍  
*Lanzhou* 蘭州  
*Laojun* 老君  
*Laojun huangting sanshijiu zhen*  
 bifu 老君黃庭三十九真祕符  
*Laojun kaitian jing* 老君開天經  
*Laozi, Laozi* 老子  
*Laozi huangting zhongtai sishijiu*  
 zhen bifu 老子黃庭中胎四十九  
 真祕符  
*Laozi ming* 老子銘  
*Laozi rushan fu* 老子入山符  
*Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經  
*le* 樂 (recte: yao 藥)  
*ledao* 樂道

- leji* 勒籍  
*li* 離  
 Li Boyang 李伯陽  
 Li Hong 李弘  
 Li Shaojun 李少君  
 Li Zhongfu 李仲甫  
*lian* 鍊, 煉  
*liandan* 鍊丹  
     Liandan he shagui wan fa” 鍊丹合  
     殺鬼丸法  
*liang* 兩  
*liangfu* 兩釜  
*lianxing* 練(鍊)形  
*lian zhi* 鍊質  
*licheng dan* 立成丹  
*Liexian zhuan* 烈仙傳  
*lilu* 藜蘆  
*ling* 靈  
*ling xin kai* 令心開  
 Lingbao 靈寶  
*Lingbao jing* 靈寶經  
*Lingbao jingmu* 靈寶經目  
 Lingbao jun 靈寶君  
 Lingbao tianzun 靈寶天尊  
*Lingbao wufu xu* 靈寶五符序  
*lingshu* 靈術  
*Lingshu ziwen* 靈書紫文  
 Lingyang ziming 陵陽子明  
*liquan* 醴泉  
 Liu An 劉安  
 Liu Xiang 劉向  
 Liu Zhigu 劉知古  
*liujia* 六甲  
*liuqi* 六氣  
*liuwei* 六畏  
*liuyi fu* 六一釜  
*liuyi ni* 六一泥  
*liuzhu* 流珠 (variant: 流朱)
- Liuzhu jiuzhuan shenxian jiudan jing*  
 流珠九轉神仙九丹經  
*liuzhu jiuzhuan xuanhuang shui*  
 流珠九轉玄黃水  
*liyu dan* 鯉魚膽  
*lizang* 歷藏  
*lizhi shi* 立制石  
*longgao, longgao ze, longgao tong*  
 龍膏, 龍膏澤, 龍膏通  
 Longhan 龍漢  
 Longhu shan 龍虎山  
*longqing* 龍輕  
*lü* 慮  
*lu* (furnace) 爐  
*lu* (Hut) 廬, 臚  
 Lu Xiujing 陸修靜  
 Lujiang 廬江  
*Lunheng* 論衡  
 Luofu shan 羅浮山  
 Luoshu 洛書  
 Luoyang 洛陽  
 Lüqiu Fangyuan 閻丘方遠  
*Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋  
*luxian* 鹵鹹  
*lüxing bu douxiu* 履行步斗宿
- Ma Mingsheng 馬明生  
*magokoro* まごころ  
 Maji 馬迹  
*mangxiao* 芒硝  
*mao* 卯  
 Mao Gu 茅固  
 Mao Qiang 毛嬙  
 Mao Ying 茅盈  
 Maoshan 茅山  
*maya* 馬牙  
*meng* 盟  
*mengxin zhi wu* 盟信之物

- miao* 妙  
*ming* 明  
*mingjing* 明鏡  
*mingmen* 命門  
*mingtang* 明堂  
*mo zeng* 沒增  
*muli* 牡蠣  
*muyu* 沐浴
- najia* 納甲  
 Nanyue 南嶽  
 Nei” 內  
*neidan* 內丹  
*neide* 內德  
*neifu zhi* 內伏之 (recte: *neiwai tu zhi* 內外塗之)  
*neiji* 內疾  
*neishi* 內視  
 Neiyè” 內業  
*ni* に  
*niaoge* 鳥翮  
*ning* 凝  
*niwan* 泥丸  
*nüzhēn* 女真
- paihuai* 徘徊  
 Pei 沛  
*peitai* 培胎  
 Pengjun 彭君  
 Penglai 蓬萊  
*Penglai shan xizao huandan ge* 蓬萊山西灶還丹歌  
 Pengzu 彭祖  
*pi baishe yin ji neng que bulang bu fan fu* 辟百蛇印及能却虎狼不犯符  
*pian* 篇  
*pin* 品
- pingqi* 平氣  
*po* 魄  
 Putai 蒲臺 (or: 蒲臺)  
*puxiao* 朴硝
- qi* (breath, pneuma, energy) 氣  
 Qi (state) 齊  
 Qi Bo 岐伯  
*qi li zi you ji* 其理自有極  
*qian* (coin; unit of measure) 錢  
*qian* (lead) 鉛  
*qian* (to transfer) 遷  
*qian* (trigram and hexagram) 乾  
*qian huanghua* 鉛黃華  
*qianbai* 鉛白  
*qiandan* 鉛丹  
 Qiang 羌  
*qianjing* 鉛精  
 Qianshan 潛山  
 Qianyuan zi 乾元子  
 Qiaoshan 橋山  
*qiming jiuguang* 七明九光  
 Qin Shi Huangdi 秦始皇帝  
*qing* 情  
*qingbai shi* 青白石  
*qingjing* 清靜  
*qingjiu* 清酒  
 Qingjun 清君  
 Qingwei tian 清微天  
*qingyao yunü* 青腰玉女  
*qingzhai* 清齋  
 Qinxin 琴心  
*qiqing titai* 氣清體太  
*quegui fu* 却鬼符  
*quegui wan* 却鬼丸  
*quegui yao* 却鬼藥  
*quehai fu* 却害符  
*queweng* 缺瓮 (recte: *quepen* 缺盆)

- ren* 仁  
*renchen* 壬辰  
*renshen* 壬申  
*renwu* 壬午  
*renxu* 壬戌  
*renyin* 壬寅  
*ri* 日  
*richen* 日辰  
*rijing* 日精  
*rimen* 日門  
*Riyue xuanshu lun* 日月玄樞論  
*rongyan* 戎鹽  
*roudan* 柔丹  
*Rouzi* 肉子  
*ru liling* 如律令  
*ru mingshan jizhao gaoshan jun fu*  
 入名山齋召高山君符  
*ru ziran* 入自然  
*Ruan Ji* 阮籍  
*runze* 潤澤  
*rushan* 入山  
*rushu* 儒書  
  
*san baojun* 三寶君  
*san tianzun* 三天尊  
*san yangshi* 三陽時  
*sanchong* 三蟲  
*sandong* 三洞  
*sandong dizi* 三洞弟子  
*Sandong jingshu mulu* 三洞經書  
 目錄  
*sang shang lu* 桑上露  
*sanguang* 三光  
*sanhuang, Sanhuang* 三皇  
*Sanhuang neiwen* 三皇內文  
*Sanhuang wen* 三皇文  
*sanhui* 三諱  
*sanjie* 三界  
  
*Sanjing liuye fa* 三精六液法  
*sanqi* 三氣  
*sanqing* 三清  
*sanquan* 三泉  
*sanren* 散人  
*sansan wugao* 三散五膏  
*sansheng* 三乘  
*sanshi* 三尸  
*Sanshiliu shuifa* 三十六水法  
*Sansu* 三素  
*santai* 三台  
*santian* 三天  
*Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經  
*Santian siming* 三天司命  
*sanxun* 三旬  
*sanwu* 三五  
*sanwu shenshui* 三五神水  
*seiren yakubutsu* 精煉藥物  
*sejie* 色界  
*shan* 禪  
*shang, zhong, xia* 上, 中, 下  
*shangbu* 上哺  
*Shangdong xindan jingjue* 上洞心  
 丹經訣  
*Shanghuang* 上皇  
*Shanghuang daojun* 上皇道君  
*Shanghuang taishang wushang Da*  
*daojun* 上皇太上無上大道君  
*shangpian* 上篇  
*Shangqing* 上清  
*Shangqing daobao jing* 上清道寶經  
*Shangqing jiuzhen zhongjing neijue*  
 上清九真中經內訣  
*Shangqing mingjian yaojing* 上清明  
 鑑要經  
*Shangqing Taishang Dijun jiuzhen*  
*zhongjing* 上清太上帝君九真  
 中經



- Shangshang Taiyi 上上太一  
 shangtian ruyuan 上天入淵  
 shangxia tufu 上下土釜  
 shanju fu 山居符  
 shanmen 山門  
 shanqing 山卿  
 shanshen 山神  
 Shaohao 少皞  
 Shaoshi shan 少室山  
 shazei 殺賊  
 she 社  
 Sheji 社稷  
 shen (ninth double hour) 申  
 shen (spirit, deity, divine) 神  
 shen (to inspect) 審  
 Shenbao jun 神寶君  
 shencang 深藏  
 shendan 神丹  
 shendan yunü 神丹玉女  
 shending 神鼎  
 shenfu (divine crucible) 神釜  
 shenfu (Divine Talisman, Divine Tally) 神符  
 shenfu huandan 神符還丹  
 sheng (raw) 生  
 sheng (unit of volume) 升  
 sheng xijiao 生犀角  
 shengji 生籍  
 shenglu 生錄  
 shengren 聖人  
 shengshuai 盛衰  
 shenguang 神光  
 shenguang li 神光醴  
 shengxu 昇虛  
 shenming 神明  
 shenni 神泥  
 Shennong bencao jing 神農本草經  
 shenren 神人  
 shenshen 神身  
 shenshi 神室  
 shenshui 神水  
 shentu 神土  
 shenwan 神丸  
 shenxian 神仙  
 Shenxian jinye jing 神仙金液經  
 Shenxian jinzbuo jing 神仙金鈞經  
 Shenxian zhuan 神仙傳  
 shenyin 神印  
 shenyong 神用  
 shenzao wu 神竈屋  
 shexiang 霞香  
 shi (double hour) 時  
 shi (master) 士  
 shi (oath) 誓  
 shi (unit of weight) 石  
 shi guiwu 使鬼物  
 shi liuhuang 石流黃  
 Shicong zi 石蔥子  
 shidan 石膽  
 shi'er hua 十二化  
 shi'er xiaoxi 十二消息  
 shihuo ren 視火人  
 Shiji 史記  
 shijie 尸解  
 shilu 石礫  
 shipi 石脾  
 shiqi 始氣  
 shiqing 始青  
 shisbi 石室  
 shixiang 石象  
 Shiyao erya 石藥爾雅  
 Shiyao fa 試藥法  
 shizhe 使者  
 shou (day of receiving) 收

- shou* (to guard) 守  
*shou xuanyi* 守玄一  
*shou zhenyi* 守真一  
 Shoushan 首山  
*shouxing* 守形  
*shouyi* 守一  
 Shu (character in the *Zhuangzi*) 儻  
*shu* (measure) 數  
*shu* (techniques, arts, practices) 術  
*shu* (writ) 書  
*shuangxue* 霜雪  
*shucong* 樹蔥  
*shui* 水  
 Shuibo 水伯  
*shuiquan* 水泉  
*shuixian* 水仙  
*shuiyin* 水銀  
*shuji* 樞機  
 Shujun 蜀郡  
 Shun 舜  
*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字  
*Shuowen tongxun dingsheng* 說文  
 通訓定聲  
*si* (an earthly branch") 巳  
*si* (to reflect) 思  
*si fantian* 四梵天  
*sibai* 四敗  
*sifu* 四輔  
*sihai* 四海  
*sihuang bashi* 四黃八石  
*siji* 死籍  
*siling* 四靈  
 Sima Qian 司馬遷  
 Siming 司命  
*sixiang* 四象  
*sizao* 司竈  
*sizuo* 思作  
 Song Wuji 宋毋忌  
 Songshan 嵩山  
*Songshi* 宋史  
 Su Lin 蘇林  
 Su Yuanlang, Su Yuanming 蘇元郎,  
 蘇元明  
*sui* 雖 (recte: *qiang* 強)  
 Sun Simiao 孫思邈  
 Sunü 素女  
*Sunü jing* 素女經  
*suqi* 宿啟  
*suren* 俗人  
  
*tai xunshou zhong shi* 太甸首中石  
*taicang* 太倉  
*taichu* 太初  
 Taihao 太皞  
 Taihe gong 太和宮  
 Taihe jun 太和君  
 Taiji 太極  
*Taiji huanming shenwan* 太極還命  
 神丸  
*Taiji zhenren jiuzhuan huandan jing*  
*yaojue* 太極真人九轉還丹經要訣  
 Taiping 太平  
*taiping daojing* 太平道經  
*Taiping jing* 太平經  
*taiqing*, *Taiqing* 太清  
*Taiqing* (character in the *Zhuangzi*)  
 泰清  
*taiqing dan* 太清丹  
*Taiqing dan baixue tufu fa* 太清丹  
 白雪土釜法  
*Taiqing danjing* 太清丹經  
*Taiqing danjing yaojue* 太清丹經  
 要訣  
 Taiqing dao Zhu 太清道主

- Taiqing guantian jing* 太清觀天經  
*Taiqing jia* 太清家  
*Taiqing jing* 太清經  
*Taiqing jing tianshi koujue* 太清經  
 天師口訣  
*Taiqing jinye shendan jing* 太清金液  
 神丹經  
*Taiqing shangdao guantian nei-  
 jing* 太清上道觀天內經  
*taiqing shangfu* 太清上符  
*Taiqing shendan baojing* 太清神丹  
 寶經  
 Taiqing shendan jingjue” 太清神  
 丹經訣  
 Taiqing shendan jingxu” 太清神  
 丹經序  
*Taiqing shibi ji* 太清石壁記  
*Taiqing xiang* 太清鄉  
*taiqing xiaoshu* 太清小術  
*Taiqing xuandu zhengyi* 太清玄都  
 正一  
*Taiqing zhenren* 太清真人  
*Taiqing zhongjing* 太青中經  
 Taishan 泰山  
 Taishang 太上  
 Taishang Laojun 太上老君  
*Taishang yuchen xuanhuang Da dao-  
 jun* 太上玉晨玄皇大道君  
 Taisu gong 太素宮  
 Taisu jun 太素君  
 Taisui 太歲  
 Taiwei 太微  
*Taiwei lingshu ziwen langgan huadan  
 shenzhen shangjing* 太微靈書紫  
 文琅玕華丹神真上經  
*taixian* 胎仙  
*taixu* 太虛  
*taixuan, Taixun* 太玄  
*taixuan xiandu* 泰玄仙都  
 Taixue 太學  
*taiyang* 太陽  
 Taiyi 太一, 太乙  
*Taiyi bacun sufu* 太一八寸素符  
*Taiyi danjin* 太一丹金  
 Taiyi silu 太一司錄  
*taiyi xunshou zhong shi* 太乙旬首  
 中石  
*Taiyi Yu yuliang* 太一禹餘糧  
*Taiyi zhao hunpo danfang* 太乙招魂  
 魄丹方  
*taiyin* 太陰  
*taiyin xuanjing* 太陰玄精  
*taiyuan zifang gong* 太淵紫房宮  
*Taizhen ke* 太真科  
 Taizong 太宗  
*tan* (altar) 壇  
*tan* (bare) 袒  
*tan* (level, smooth) 坦  
*tan* (simple man) 儻  
*tan* (to explore) 探  
 Tang Gaozong 唐高宗  
 Tanggu 湯谷  
*tannen* 丹念  
*tansei* 丹精, 丹誠  
*tansheng* 貪生  
 Tao Hongjing 陶弘景  
 Tao Ming 陶明  
 Tao Tongming 陶通明  
 Tao Yinju 陶隱居  
 Tianbao jun 天寶君  
*tiandao* 天道  
*tiandi zhi fu* 天地之符  
*Tiandiren jing* 天地人經  
*tiangan* 天干

- Tianhuang 天皇  
*tiankai dipo ri* 天開地破日  
*tianling diqi* 天靈地祇  
*tianqi* 天氣  
*tianshen* 天神  
 Tianshi 天師  
 Tianshi dao 天師道  
*tianxia* 天下  
*tianxian* 天仙  
*tianxiong* 天雄  
 Tianzhen huangren 天真皇人  
 Tianzhu shan 天柱山  
*tianzun* 天尊  
*tiao* (to mix) 調  
*tiaoli* 條理  
*tie* 鐵  
*tieguo* 鐵鍋  
*tingzhi* 亭脂  
*tong* 銅  
*tong jing yu taiqing zhi ben* 同精於  
 太清之本  
*tongban* 銅板  
*tongqing* 銅青  
*tongren* 同人  
*tongshen* 通神  
*tuding* 土鼎  
*tufu* 土釜  
*tugu naxin* 吐故納新  
*tui* 推  
*tui er zishi* 退而自失  
*tulong gao* 土龍膏  
*tulong shi* 土龍矢  
*tuna* 吐納  
*tuzheng xi waixie* 吐正吸外邪  
  
*usu-akai iro* 薄赤い色  
  
 Wai” 外  
*waidan* 外丹  
*waifu* 外傳  
*wailai zhi huo* 外來之禍  
*wang, xiang, xiu, qiu, si* 王, 相, 休,  
 囚, 死  
 Wang Chang 王長  
 Wang Chong 王充  
 Wang Yi 王逸  
 Wangjun 王君  
*wangliang* 魍魎  
*Wangmu sitong san* 王母四童散  
 Wangwu shan 王屋山  
*wangxiang* 王相  
*Wangzi Qiao bei* 王子喬碑  
*Wanjin jue* 萬金訣  
*wanwu* 萬物  
*wei* (an “earthly branch”) 未  
*wei* (“weft” text, apocryphon) 緯  
*wei* (tenuous) 微  
 Wei Boyang 魏伯陽  
*wei fu* 爲釜  
 Weiwang 威王  
*weixi jusheng* 威喜巨勝  
*wen* 文  
*wenjue* 文訣  
 Wenwang 文王  
 Wenyan 文言  
*wu* (a “celestial stem”) 戊  
*wu* (an “earthly branch”) 午  
*wu* (Non-Being) 無  
*wu* (“shaman”, medium) 巫  
*wu* (spirits) 物  
*Wu lingdan jing* 五靈丹經  
*wubing* 五兵  
*wuchen* 戊辰  
*wucheng* 五城

- Wude 武德  
*wude zhi yun* 五德之運  
*Wudi fu* 五帝符  
*wudi shenfu* 五帝神符  
*wudu* 五毒  
 Wudu 武都  
*Wufu jing* 五符經  
*wugong* 蜈蚣  
*wuhao* 烏號, 呼號  
*wuji* (the Center) 戊己  
*wuji* (Five Interdictions) 五忌  
*wuji dadao* 無極大道  
*Wujin fen tujue* 五金粉圖訣  
*wuling dan* 五靈丹  
 Wuqiong (character in the *Zhuangzi*)  
 無窮  
*wuse jie* 無色界  
*wuse shuangxue* 五色霜雪  
*Wushang biyao* 無上祕要  
*wushen* 戊申  
*wushen fu* 五神符  
*wushi* 五石  
 Wushi (character in the *Zhuangzi*)  
 無始  
*wushi dan* 五石丹  
*wushi siri* 五石死日  
*wutou* 烏頭  
 Wuwang 吳王  
*wuwei* 無爲  
 Wuwei (character in the *Zhuangzi*)  
 無爲  
*wuxiang* 五香  
*wuxiang tang* 五香湯  
*wuxie shengri* 五邪生日  
*wuxing* 五行  
*wuxu* 戊戌  
*wuyao* 五曜  
 Wuyi 烏夷  
*wuyin* 戊寅  
*wuyue* 五嶽  
*wuyue shangjue ri* 五嶽傷絕日  
*Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五嶽真形圖  
*wuzang* 五藏  
  
*xi* 錫  
 Xi Shi 西施  
*xiabu* 下晡  
*xian* 仙, 僊  
*Xianbo Taiyi jian* 仙伯太一檢  
*xiandao* 僊道  
*xiang* 象  
*Xiang'er* 想爾  
*xiangni* 香泥  
 Xiangong 仙公  
*xiangsheng* 相生  
*xianguan* 仙官  
 Xiangzhou 相州  
*xianjing* 仙經  
*xianlu* 仙籙  
 Xianmen Gao 羨門高  
*xianren* 仙人  
*xiantian* 先天  
 Xianyang 咸陽  
*xianzhen yulu* 仙真玉籙  
*xiaodan* 小丹  
*Xiaodao lun* 笑道論  
*xiaohua* 銷化  
 Xiaoming 宵明  
*xiaoshi* 硝石  
*xiaoshu* 小術  
*xiaoyao* 小藥  
 Xicheng Wangjun 西城王君  
*Xici* 繫辭  
*xilong gao* 西龍膏

- xin* 信  
*Xin Tangshu* 新唐書  
*xinchou* 辛丑  
*xing* 形  
*xingchu* 行廚  
*xinghai* 形骸  
*xingjie xiaohua* 形解銷化  
*xingqi* (astrology) 星氣  
*xingqi* (circulating breath) 行氣  
*Xingyang* 滎陽  
*xinbai* 辛亥  
   *Xinshu xia*” 心術下  
*xinsi* 辛巳  
*xinwei* 辛未  
*Xinxiu bencao* 新修本草  
*xionggi erxue* 雄雌二雪  
*xionghuang* 雄黃  
*xiongxue* 雄雪  
*xiuyang* 修養  
*Xiwang mu* 西王母  
*xu* (an earthly branch”) 戌  
*xu* (void, emptiness) 虛  
*Xu Fu* 徐福  
*Xu Shen* 許慎  
*xuanbai* 玄白  
*Xuanguang Yunü* 玄光玉女  
*xuanhuang* 玄黃  
*xuanhuang chitu fu* 玄黃赤土釜  
*xuanhuang hua* 玄黃華  
*xuanhuang zhi ye* 玄黃之液  
*xuanlu* 玄路  
*xuanming* 玄冥  
*xuanming longgao* 玄明龍膏  
*Xuannü* 玄女  
*xuanqi* 玄氣  
*xuanshui longgao* 玄水龍膏  
*xuanshui ye* 玄水液  
  
*Xuanwang* 宣王  
*xuanzhou* 玄洲  
*xuanzhu* 玄珠  
*Xuanzi* 玄子  
*Xuanzong* 玄宗  
*xuwu* 虛無  
  
*yan* (salt) 鹽  
*Yan* (state) 燕  
*Yan Zhitui* 顏之推  
*Yang An* 陽安  
*yangcheng sha* 陽成砂  
*yangmen* 陽門  
*yangshen* 養神  
*yangsheng* 養生  
*Yanmen zi* 衍門子  
*Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論  
*yao* 藥  
*yaofu* 藥釜  
*yaogui* 妖鬼  
*yaojiu* 藥酒  
*yaoling* 曜靈  
*yaotiao* 窈窕  
*ye* 業  
*yege* 野葛  
*yelian zhi shui* 冶鍊之水  
*yeming* 夜明  
*yi* (intention) 意  
*yi* (One) 一, 乙  
*Yi* (people) 夷  
*yihai* 乙亥  
*Yijing* 易經  
*yimao* 乙卯  
*yin* (an earthly branch”) 寅  
*yin* (seal) 印  
*yin* (silver) 銀  
*Yin Changsheng* 陰長生

- Yin Xi 尹喜  
*yindao* 陰道  
 Ying Shao 應邵  
 Yingchuan 穎川  
*yinlou fen* 蚓螻糞  
*yinlun sanxing* 隱淪散形  
 Yinshou zi 尹壽子  
*yinxue* 銀雪  
*yinyang jia* 陰陽家  
*yinyang zhuyun* 陰陽主運  
*yinyuan* 因緣  
*yiqi* 一氣  
*yishi* 一時  
*yisi* 乙巳  
*yixing* 易形  
*yixue* 易學  
 Yonghuai shi” 詠懷詩  
*you* (an earthly branch”) 酉  
*you* (Being) 有  
*youguan* 幽關  
*youshi* 幽室  
*youwei* 右位  
 Yu 禹  
 Yu Fan 虞翻  
*yu tiandi xiangbi, yu riyue tongguang*  
 與天地相畢、與日月同光  
*Yu yuliang* 禹餘糧  
*yuanbao* 元胞  
*yuanben* 元本  
 Yuandao jun 元道君  
*yuanfu* 元夫  
 Yuanguang Taiyi jun 元光太一君  
*yuanhuang* 元黃  
*yuanjing* 元精  
 Yuanjun 元君  
*yuanmu* 元母  
*yuanqi* 元氣  
 Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊  
*Yuanyou* 遠遊  
*yubu* 禹步  
*yuchi* 玉池  
 Yue 越  
*yue* (bond) 約  
*yuede* 月德  
*yuejian* 月建  
*yuesha* 月殺  
*yueting* 月庭  
*yujiang* 玉漿  
*yujie* 欲界  
 Yujing 玉京  
*yulun zhi che* 羽輪之車  
*yun* 運  
*yunan* 玉男  
 Yunjin shan 雲錦山  
*yunmu* 雲母  
 Yuntai feng 雲台峰  
*yunü* 玉女  
*Yunü yinwei* 玉女隱微  
 Yunyang zi 雲陽子  
 Yuqing 玉清  
*yuren* 羽人  
*yushi* (arsenolite) 礬石  
*yushi* (brass) 鍮石  
 Yushi (Master of Rain) 雨師  
 Yutang 玉堂  
*yutong* 玉童  
*yuye* 玉液  
*yuying* 玉英  
 Yuyu tian 禹餘天  
 Yuzhang 豫章  
 Yuzhou 蔚州  
  
*za* 雜  
*zao* 竈

- Zao neidan fa” 造內丹法  
 zaohua zhe 造化者  
 zaoshen 竈神  
 zaowu 竈屋  
 zawei daoshi 雜猥道士  
 zewei 澤尉  
 zhai 齋  
 Zhang Daoling 張道陵  
 Zhang Feng 張奉  
 Zhang Jiugai 張九垓  
 Zhang Ju 張巨  
 Zhang zhenren jinshi lingsha lun  
 張真人金石靈砂論  
 Zhang Zifang 張子房  
 Zhang Zilie 張自烈  
 zhangshu 章書  
 Zhao Sheng 趙昇  
 zhaoxia 朝霞  
 zhaozhi guishen 召制鬼神  
 Zheng Qiao 鄭樵  
 Zheng Yin 鄭隱  
 Zhen'gao 真誥  
 Zhengbo Qiao 正伯僑  
 zhengjing 正靜  
 zhengqi 正氣  
 Zhengyi 正一  
 Zhengyi fawen 正一法文  
 Zhengyi jingtu kejie pin 正一經圖  
 科戒品  
 Zhengzi tong 正字通  
 zhenhong 真汞  
 Zhenling weiye tu 真靈位業圖  
 zhenqian 真鉛  
 Zhenren ge” 真人歌  
 zhensha 真砂  
 zhenwu 真吾  
 zhenxian 真仙  
 zhenxin 真心  
 zhenyang 真陽  
 zhenyi 真一  
 zhenyin 真陰  
 Zhenzhong hongbao 枕中鴻寶  
 zhenzhu (Real Pearl) 真珠  
 zhenzhu (Real Vermilion) 真朱  
 zhi 芝  
 zhi ([Earthly] Branches) 支  
 zhi (to control; to fix) 治  
 zhijing 至清  
 zhimiao 至妙  
 zhinü 織女  
 zhiren 至人  
 zhiyao 至藥  
 zhizhen 質真  
 Zhong Maojun 中茅君  
 zhongbao 重寶  
 zhongdan 中丹  
 zhonggong 中宮  
 Zhonghuang 中黃  
 Zhongji Huanglao 中極黃老  
 zhongjing 眾精  
 zhongru 鍾乳  
 zhongxian 中仙  
 Zhongyue jun 中嶽君  
 zhongzhang 中章  
 Zhou Yishan 周義山  
 Zhouyi cantong qi 周易參同契  
 zhu (atractylis) 朮  
 zhu (dot) 丶  
 zhu (note, commentary) 注  
 zhu (pearl) 珠  
 zhu (unit of weight) 銖  
 Zhu Junsheng 朱駿聲  
 zhuan (cycle, cyclical refining) 轉  
 zhuan (to select, to edit) 撰



Zhuangzi, *Zhuangzi* 莊子

*zhu'er* 朱兒

Zhuiyi 佳夷

*zhuren* 主人

*zhusha* 朱砂

*zi* 子

Zidan 子丹

*zifang* 紫房

*zifen* 紫粉

Zigong 紫宮

*ziming* 子明

*zinü* 紫女

*zisha* 紫砂

*zishi ying* 紫石英

Ziwei 紫微

*zixiao* 紫霄

Zixuan 子玄

Ziyang zhenren 紫陽真人

*ziye* 滋液

*ziyou nü* 紫遊女

Zizhou 梓州

Zou Yan 鄒衍

*zuo* 座

*zuo chitu fu fa* 作赤土釜法

Zuo Ci (Zuo Yuanfang) 左慈

(左元放)

*zuodao* 左道

*zuogu muli* 左顧牡蠣

*zuowei* (left ran“) 左位

*zuowei* (vinegar) 左味

*zuozai liwang* 坐在立亡

“Zuozao fa” 作竈法

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